

HISTORY
OF
CHRISTIANITY

THE
HISTORY
OF
CHRISTIANITY,

FROM
THE BIRTH OF CHRIST
TO
THE ABOLITION OF PAGANISM IN THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

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PREFACE.

THE History of the Jews was that of a Nation, the History of Christianity is that of a Religion. Yet, as the Jewish Annals might be considered in their relation to the general history of man, to the rank which the nation bore among the various families of the human race, and the influence which it exercised on the civilisation of mankind : so Christianity may be viewed either in a strictly religious, or rather in a temporal, social, and political light. In the former case the writer will dwell almost exclusively on the religious doctrines, and will bear continual reference to the new relation established between man and the Supreme Being : the predominant character will be that of the Theologian. In the latter, although he may not altogether decline the examination of the religious doctrines, their development and their variations, his leading object will be to trace the effect of Christianity on the individual and social happiness of man, its influence on the Polity, the Laws and Institutions, the opinions, the manners, even on the Arts and the Literature of the Christian world : he will write rather as an Historian than a religious Instructor. Though, in fact, a candid and dispassionate survey of the connection of Christianity with the temporal happiness, and with the intellectual and social advancement of mankind, even to the religious inquirer, cannot but be of high importance and interest ; while with the general mass, at least of the reading and intelligent part of the community, nothing tends so powerfully to the strengthening or weakening of religious impression and sentiment, nothing acts so extensively, even though perhaps indirectly, on the formation of religious opinions, and on the speculative or practical belief or rejection of Christianity, as the notions we entertain of its influence on the history of man, and its relation to human happiness and social improvement. This latter is the express design of the

present work, which the plan and scope will be more fully explained at the close of the Introductory Chapter.

If at any time I entertained doubts as to the expediency of including an historical view of the Life of the Saviour in the history of his religion, those doubts have been set at rest by the appearance of the recent work of Strauss. Though, for reasons stated in a separate Appendix to this work, I have no hesitation in declaring my conviction that the theory of Strauss is an *historical impossibility*, yet the extraordinary sensation which this book has produced in the most learned and intellectually active nation of Europe, gives it an undeniable importance. Though, till recently, only accessible to the small, yet rapidly increasing, number of students of German literature in this country, and, from its enormous length and manner of composition, not likely to be translated into English, it has, however, already appeared in a French translation (1). After reading with much attention the work of Strauss, I turned back to my own brief and rapid outline, which had been finished some time before, and found what appeared to me a complete, though of course undesigned, refutation of his hypothesis. In my view, the Life of Christ (independent of its supernatural or religious character) offers a clear, genuine, and *purely historical* narrative, connected, by numberless fine, and obviously inartificial links, with the history of the times, full of local and temporary allusions, perfectly unpremeditated, yet of surprising accuracy, to all the events, characters, opinions, sentiments, usages, to the whole life, as it were, of that peculiar period; altogether, therefore, repudiating that mythic character which Strauss has endeavoured to trace throughout the Evangelic narrative. In all its essential character it is true and unadulterated *History* (2).

In this, however, as in all respects, I have been anxious and studious not to give my work a controversial tone. My "Life of

(1) The only good view of Strauss's work with which I am acquainted, in a language accessible to the ordinary reader, is an article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, by M. E. Quinet.

(2) I agree on this point with the author of a work which appeared last year in Paris, M. Salvador. He is speaking of the Evangelic History, — une œuvre enfin dans laquelle le lieu de la scène, le héros, les figures accessoires, tout le

matériel, appartiennent à cette nation même, et où chaque ligne exige, pour être comprise, la connaissance rigoureuse de son histoire, de ses lois, et de ses mœurs anciennes, des localités, préjugés, du langage, des opinions populaires, des sectes, du gouvernement, et des diverses classes de Juifs existant aux époques où les événements sont rapportés. — *Jésus-Christ : sa Doctrine*, etc. tom. i. p. 159.

Christ" remains exactly as it was originally written; excepting in one or two notes. I have reserved entirely my reference to the work of Strauss for a separate Appendix. In these animadversions, and in some scattered observations which I have here and there ventured to make in my notes, on foreign, chiefly German, writers, I shall not be accused of that narrow jealousy, and, in my opinion, unworthy and timid suspicion, with which the writers of that country are proscribed by many. I am under too much obligation to their profound research and philosophical tone of thought, not openly to express my gratitude to such works of German writers as I have been able to obtain, which have had any bearing on the subject of my inquiries.

I could wish most unfeignedly that our modern literature were so rich in writings displaying the same unwearied industry, the same universal command of the literature of all ages and all countries, the same boldness, sagacity, and impartiality in historical criticism, as to enable us to dispense with such assistance. Though, in truth, with more or less of these high qualifications, German literature unites religious views of every shade and character, from the Christliche Mystik of Goerres, which would bring back the faith of Europe to the Golden Legend and the Hagiography of what we still venture to call the dark ages, down, in regular series, to Strauss, or, if there be any thing below Strauss, in the descending scale of Christian belief.

On all other points, especially those which are at present agitated in this country, though of course I cannot be, yet I have written as if in total ignorance of the existence of such discussions. I have delivered, without fear, and without partiality, what I have conscientiously believed to be the truth. I write for the general reader, rather than for the members of my own profession; as I cannot understand why such subjects of universal interest should be secluded as the peculiar objects of study to one class or order alone.

In one respect, the present possesses an advantage, in which the former work of the Author, from its size and form, was unavoidably deficient,—the greater copiousness of confirmatory and

illustrative quotation. I trust that I have avoided the opposite error of encumbering and overloading either my text or my notes with the conflicting opinions of former writers. Nothing is more easy than this prodigal accumulation of authorities ; it would have been a very light task to have swelled the notes to twice the size of the volumes. The Author's notion of history is, that it should give the results, not the process of inquiry ; and, however difficult this may be, during the period of which he now writes, where the authenticity of almost every document is questioned, and every minute point is a controversy, he has with his utmost diligence investigated, and with scrupulous fidelity repeated, what appeared to him to be the truth. Once or twice only, where the authorities are so nicely balanced, that it is almost impossible to form a satisfactory conclusion, he has admitted the conflicting arguments into the Text ; and he has always cautiously avoided to deliver that, which is extremely problematical, as historical certainty. Where he has deviated from his ordinary practice of citing few rather than many names in his notes, it is on certain subjects, chiefly Oriental, on which the opinions of well-known scholars possess, in themselves, weight and authority.

If he should be blest with life and leisure, the Author cannot but look forward to the continuation of this History with increasing interest, as it approaches the period of the re-creation of European society under the influence of Christianity. As Christian History, surveyed in a wise and candid spirit, cannot but be a useful school for the promotion of Christian faith ; so no study can tend more directly to, or more imperatively enforce on all unprejudiced and dispassionate minds, mutual forbearance, enlightened toleration, and the greatest even of Christian virtues, Christian charity.

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HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY.



BOOK I

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION—STATE AND VARIOUS FORMS OF PAGAN RELIGION, AND OF PHILOSOPHY.

THE reign of Augustus Cæsar is the most remarkable epoch in the history of mankind. For the first time, a large part of the families, tribes, and nations, into which the human race had gradually separated, were united under a vast, uniform, and apparently permanent, social system. The older Asiatic empires had, in general, owed their rise to the ability and success of some adventurous conqueror; and, when the master-hand was withdrawn, fell asunder; or were swept away to make room for some new kingdom or dynasty, which sprang up with equal rapidity, and in its turn experienced the same fate. The Grecian monarchy established by Alexander, as though it shared in the Asiatic principle of vast and sudden growth and as rapid decay, broke up at his death into several conflicting kingdoms; yet survived in its influence, and united, in some degree, Western Asia, Egypt, and Greece into one political system, in which the Greek language and manners predominated. But the monarchy of Rome was founded on principles as yet unknown; the kingdoms, which were won by the most unjustifiable aggression, were, for the most part, governed with a judicious union of firmness and conciliation, in which the conscious strength of irresistible power was tempered with the wisest respect to national usages. The Romans conquered like savages, but ruled like philosophic statesmen (1). Till, from the Euphrates to

Era of
Augustus
Cæsar.

(1) On the capture of a city, promiscuous massacre was the general order, which descended even to brute animals, until a certain signal. Polyb. x. 15. As to the latter point, I mean, of

course, the general policy, not the local tyranny, which was so often exercised by the individual provincial governor.

the Atlantic, from the shores of Britain, and the borders of the German forests, to the sands of the African Desert, the whole Western world was consolidated into one great commonwealth, united by the bonds of law and government, by facilities of communication and commerce, and by the general dissemination of the Greek and Latin languages.

Roman
Civili-
sation

For civilisation followed in the train of Roman conquest : the ferocity of her martial temperament seemed to have spent itself in the civil wars : the lava flood of her ambition had cooled ; and wherever it had spread, a rich and luxuriant vegetation broke forth. At least down to the time of the Antonines, though occasionally disturbed by the contests which arose on the change of dynasties, the rapid progress of improvement was by no means retarded. Diverging from Rome as a centre, magnificent and commodious roads connected the most remote countries ; the free navigation of the Mediterranean united the most flourishing cities of the empire ; the military colonies had disseminated the language and manners of the South in the most distant regions ; the wealth and population of the African and Asiatic provinces had steadily increased ; while, amid the forests of Gaul, the morasses of Britain, the sierras of Spain, flourishing cities arose ; and the arts, the luxuries, the order, and regularity of cultivated life were introduced into regions which, a short time before, had afforded a scanty and precarious subsistence to tribes scarcely acquainted with agriculture. The frontiers of civilisation seemed gradually to advance, and to drive back the still-receding barbarism (1) : while within the pale, national distinctions were dying away ; all tribes and races met amicably in the general relation of Roman subjects or citizens and mankind seemed settling down into one great federal society (2).

Appear-
ance of
Christian-
ity

About this point of time Christianity appeared. As Rome had united the whole Western world into one, as it might almost seem, lasting social system, so Christianity was the first religion which aimed at an universal and permanent moral conquest. The religions of the older world were content with their dominion over the particular people which were their several votaries. Family, tribal, national, deities were universally recognised ; and as their gods accompanied the migrations or the conquests of different nations, their worship was extended over a wider surface, but rarely propagated among the subject races. To drag in triumph the divinities of a vanquished people was the last and most insulting mark of subjugation (3). Yet, though the gods of the conquerors, had thus

The older
Religions.

(1) Quæ sparsa congregaret imperia, ritusque molliret, et tot populorum discordes ferasque linguas sermonis commercio contraheret ad colloquia, et humanitatem homini daret. Plin. Nat. Hist. iii. 5.

(2) "Unum esse reipublicæ corpus, atque

unius animo regendum." Such was the argument of Asinius Gallus, Tac. Ann. i. 12.

(3) Tot de diis, quot de gentibus triumphis. Tertullian, Compare Isaiah, xlvi. 1., and Gese-nius's note; Jer. xlviii. 7. xlix. 3.; Hos. x. 5, 6.; Dan. xi. 8.

manifested their superiority, and, in some cases, the subject nation might be inclined to desert their inefficient protectors, who had been found wanting in the hour of trial; still the godhead even of the defeated divinities was not denied: though their power could not withstand the mightier tutelary deity of the invaders; yet their right to a seat in the crowded synod of heaven, and their rank among the intermediate rulers of the world, was not called in question (1). The conqueror might, indeed, take delight in showing his contempt, and, as it were, trampling under foot the rebuked and impotent deities of his subject; and thus religious persecution be inflicted by the oppressor, and religious fanaticism excited among the oppressed. Yet, if the temple was desecrated, the altar thrown down, the priesthood degraded or put to the sword, this was done in the fierceness of hostility, or the insolence of pride (2); or from policy, lest the religion should become the rallying point of civil independence (3); rarely, if ever, for the purpose of extirpating a false, or supplanting it by a true, system of belief; perhaps in no instance with the design of promulgating the tenets of a more pure and perfect religion. A wiser policy commenced with Alexander. The deities of the conquered nations were treated with uniform reverence, the sacrilegious plunder of their temples punished with exemplary severity (4). According to the Grecian system, their own gods were recognised in those of Egypt and Asia; they were called by Grecian names (5), and worshipped with the accustomed offerings; and thus all religious differences between Macedonian, and Syrian, and Egyptian, and Persian, at once vanished away. On the same principle, and with equal sagacity, Rome, in this as in other respects, aspired to enslave the mind of those nations which had been prostrated by her arms. The gods of the subject nations were treated with every mark of respect: sometimes they were admitted within the walls of the conqueror, as though to render their allegiance, and rank themselves in peaceful subordination under the supreme divinity of the Roman Gradivus,

Policy of
Alexander;

of Rome.

(1) There is a curious passage in Lydus de Ostentis, a book which probably contains some parts of the ancient ritual of Rome. A certain aspect of a comet was merely foretold victory, but the passing over of the hostile gods to the side of the Romans: *καὶ αὐτὰ δὲ τὰ θεῖα καταλείβουσι τοὺς πολέμιους, ὥστε ἐκ περισσὺ προστεθῆναι τοῖς νικηταῖς.* — Lydus de Ostentis, lib. 12.

(2) Such was the conduct of Cambyses in Egypt. Xerxes had, before his Grecian invasion, shown the proud intolerance of his disposition, in destroying the deities of the Babylonians, and slaying their priesthood (Herod. i. 183., and Arrian, vii. 19.); though, in this case, the rapacity which fatally induced him to pillage and desecrate the temples of Greece may have

combined with his natural arrogance. Herod. viii. 53.

(3) This was most likely the principle of the horrible persecution of the Jews by Antiochus Epiphanes, though a kind of heathen bigotry seems to have mingled with his strange character. 1 Macc. i. 41. et seqq. 2 Macc. vi. Diod. Sic. xxxiv. 1. Hist. of the Jews, vol. ii. p. 42.

(4) Arrian, lib. vi. p. 431. 439. (Edit. Amst. 1668.); Polyb. v. 10.

(5) Arrian, lib. iii. p. 158., vii. p. 464., and 486. Some Persian traditions, perhaps, represent Alexander as a religious persecutor; but these are of no authority against the direct statement of the Greek historians. The Indian religious usages, and the conduct of some of their sages, excited the wonder of the Greeks.

or the Jupiter of the Capitol (1); till, at length, they all met in the amicable synod of the Pantheon, a representative assembly, as it were, of the presiding deities of all nations, in Rome, the religious as well as the civil capital of the world (2). The state, as Cicero shows in his Book of Laws, retained the power of declaring what forms of religion were permitted by the law (*licitæ*) (3); but this authority was rarely exercised with rigour, excepting against such foreign superstitions as were considered pernicious to the morals of the people, in earlier times, the Dionysiac (4); in later, the Isiac and Serapic rites (5).

Universal-
ity of
Christian-
ity.

Christianity proclaimed itself the religion not of family, or tribe, or nation, but of universal man. It admitted within its pale, on equal terms, all ranks and all races. It addressed mankind as one brotherhood, sprung from one common progenitor, and raised to immortality by one Redeemer. In this respect Christianity might appear singularly adapted to become the religion of a great empire. At an earlier period in the annals of the world, it would have encountered obstacles apparently insurmountable, in passing from one province to another, in moulding hostile and jealous nations into one religious community. A fiercer fire was necessary to melt and fuse the discordant elements into one kindred mass, before its gentler warmth could penetrate and permeate the whole with its vivifying influence. Not only were the circumstances of the times favourable to the extensive propagation of Christianity, from the facility of intercourse between the most remote nations, the cessation of hostile movements, and the uniform system of internal police, but the state of mankind seemed imperiously to demand the introduction of a new religion, to satisfy those universal propensities of human nature, which connect man with a higher order of things. Man, as history and experience teach, is essentially a

(1) *Solere Romanos Deos omnes urbium superatarum partium privatum per familias, spargere, partium publice consecrare.* Arnob. iii. 38.

It was a grave charge against Marcellus, that, by plundering the temples in Sicily, he had made the state an object of jealousy (*ἐπιφθόρον*), because not only men but gods were led in triumph. The older citizens approved rather the conduct of Fabius Maximus, who left to the Tarantines their offended gods. Plut. Vit. Marc.

(2) According to Verrius Flaccus, cited by Pliny (xxviii. 2.), the Romans used to invoke the tutelary deity of every place which they besieged, and bribed him to their side by promising greater honours. Macrobius has a copy of the form of Evocation. The name of the tutelary deity of Rome was a secret. Pliny, Nat. H. iii. 5. Bayle, Art. Soranus. Plut. Quæst. Rom. Note on Hume's Hist. Nat. Rel. Essays, p. 450.

Roma triumphantis quotiens duces inclita currum
Plautibus excepit, totiens altaria Divum
Addidit, et spoliis subivit nova numina fecit

PRUDENTIUS

Compare Augustin de Cons. Evang. i. 18.

For the Grecian custom on this subject, see Thucyd. iv. 98. Philip, the king of Macedon, defeated by Flaminius in his wars with the Grecian states, paid little respect to the temples. His admiral Diacarchus is said to have erected and sacrificed on two altars to Impiety and Lawlessness, *Ἀσεβεία* and *Παρανομία*. This fact would be incredible on less grave authority than that of Polybius, lib. xviii. 37. On the general respect to temples in war, comp. Grot. de Jur. Bell. et Pac. iii. 12. 6.

(3) The question is well discussed by Jortin, Discourses, p. 53. *note*. Dionysius Hal. distinguishes between religions permitted, and publicly received. lib. ii. vol. i. p. 275. edit. Reiske.

(4) Livy, xxix. 12. et seqq.

(5) During the republic, the temples of Isis and Serapis were twice ordered to be destroyed, Dion. xl. p. 142. xlii. p. 196., also liv. p. 525, Val. Max. i. 3. Prop. ii. 24. On the Roman law on this subject, compare Jortin, Discourses, p. 53. Gibbon, vol. i. p. 55, with Wenck's note

religious being; there are certain faculties and modes of thinking and feeling apparently inseparable from his mental organisation, which lead him irresistibly to seek some communication with another and a higher world. But at the present juncture, the ancient religions were effete: they belonged to a totally different state of civilisation; though they retained the strong hold of habit and interest on different classes of society, yet the general mind was advanced beyond them; they could not supply the religious necessities of the age. Thus, the world, peaceably united under one temporal monarchy, might be compared to a vast body without a soul: the throne of the human mind appeared vacant; among the rival competitors for its dominion, none advanced more than claims local, or limited to a certain class. Nothing less was required than a religion co-extensive with the empire of Rome, and calculated for the advanced state of intellectual culture: and in Christianity this new element of society was found; which, in fact, incorporating itself with manners, usages, and laws, has been the bond which has held together, notwithstanding the internal feuds and divisions, the great European commonwealth; maintained a kind of federal relation between its parts; and stamped its peculiar character on the whole of modern history.

Christianity announced the appearance of its Divine Author as the era of a new moral creation; and if we take our stand, as it were, on the isthmus which separates the ancient from the modern world, and survey the state of mankind before and after the introduction of this new power into human society, it is impossible not to be struck with the total revolution in the whole aspect of the world. If from this point of view we look upward, we see the dissociating principle at work both in the civil and religious usages of mankind; the human race breaking up into countless independent tribes and nations, which recede more and more from each other as they gradually spread over the surface of the earth; and in some parts, as we adopt the theory of the primitive barbarism (1), or that of the degeneracy of man from an earlier state of culture, either remaining stationary at the lowest point of ignorance and rudeness, or sinking to it; either resuming the primeval dignity of the race, or rising gradually to a higher state of civilisation. A certain diversity of religion follows the diversity of race, of people, and of country. In no respect is the common nature of human kind so strongly indicated

Dissociating principle of old religions

(1) The notion that the primeval state of man was altogether barbarous and uncivilised, so generally prevalent in the philosophy of the two last centuries (for Dryden's line,

Since wild in woods the noble savage ran.

contains the whole theory of Rousseau) has encountered a strong reaction. It is remarkable that Niebuhr in Germany, and Archbishop Whateley in this country, with no knowledge of each

other's views, should at the same time call in question this, almost established, theory. Dr. Whateley's argument, that there is no instance in history of a nation self-raised from savage life, is very strong. I have been much struck by finding a very strong and lucid statement to the same effect, in an unpublished lecture of the late Lord Stowell (Sir William Scott), delivered when professor of history at Oxford.

as in the universality of some kind of religion ; in no respect is man so various, yet so much the same. All the religions of antiquity, multiform and countless as they appear, may be easily reduced to certain classes, and, independent of the traditions which they may possess in common, throughout the whole, reigns something like a family resemblance. Whether all may be rightly considered as deprivations of the same primitive form of worship ; whether the human mind is necessarily confined to a certain circle of religious notions ; whether the striking phenomena of the visible world, presented to the imagination of various people in a similar state of civilisation, will excite the same train of devotional thoughts and emotions,—the philosophical spirit, and extensive range of inquiry, which in modern times have been carried into the study of mythology, approximate in the most remarkable manner the religions of the most remote countries (1). The same primary principles everywhere appear, modified by the social state, the local circumstances, the civil customs, the imaginative or practical character of the people. Each state of social culture has its characteristic theology, self-adapted to the intellectual and moral condition of the people, and coloured in some degree by the habits of life. In the rudest and most savage races we find a gross superstition, called by modern foreign writers, Fetichism (2), in which the shapeless stone, the meanest reptile, any object however worthless or insignificant, is consecrated by a vague and mysterious reverence, as the representative of an unseen Being. The beneficence of this deity is usually limited to supplying the wants of the day, or to influencing the hourly occurrences of a life, in which violent and exhausting labour alternates either with periods of sluggish and torpid indolence. as among some of the North American tribes ; or, as among the Africans, with wild bursts of thoughtless merriment (3). This Fetichism apparently survived in more polished nations, in the household

Fetichism.

(1) The best, in my opinion, and most comprehensive work on the ancient religions, is the (yet unfinished) translation of Creuzer's *Symbolik*, by M. De Guignaut, *Religions de l'Antiquité*, Paris, 1825, 1835. It is far superior in arrangement, and does not appear to me so obstinately wedded to the symbolic theory as the original of Creuzer. The *Aglaophamus* of Lobeck, as might be expected from that distinguished scholar, is full of profound and accurate erudition. Yet I cannot but think that the Grecian polytheism will be better understood when considered in connection with the other religions of antiquity, than as an entirely independent system, and surely the sarcastic tone in which M. Lobeck speaks of the Oriental studies of his contemporaries is unworthy of a man of consummate learning. The work of the late M. Constant, *Sur la Religion*, extensive in research, ingenious in argument, and eloquent in style, is in my, perhaps partial, judgment, vitiated by an hostility to every kind of priesthood, better suited to the philosophy of the last than of the present century. M. Constant has placed the evils of sacerdotal influence in the strongest light, and

disguised or dissembled its advantages. The ancient priestly castes, I conceive, attained their power over the rest of their race by their acknowledged superiority ; they were the benefactors, and thence the rulers of their people : *to retain their power*, as the people advanced, they resorted to every means of keeping men in ignorance and subjection, and so degenerated into the tyrants of the human mind. At all events, sacerdotal domination (and here M. Constant would have agreed with us) is altogether alien to genuine Christianity.

(2) The Fetiche of the African is the Manitou of the American Indian. The word Fetiche was first, I believe, brought into general use in the curious volume of the President De Brosses, *Du Culte des Dieux Fetiches*. The word was formed by the traders to Africa, from the Portuguese, *Fetisso*, *chose bee, enchantee, divine, ou rendant des oracles*, De Brosses, p. 18.

(3) Hume (*History of Nat. Religion*) argues that a pure and philosophical theism could never be the creed of a barbarous nation struggling with want.

gods, perhaps in the Teraphim, and in the sacred stones (the Bætylia), which were thought either to have fallen from heaven, or were sanctified by immemorial reverence.

In the Oriental pastoral tribes, Tsabaism (1), the simpler worship of the heavenly bodies, in general prevailed; which among the agricultural races grew up into a more complicated system, connecting the periodical revolutions of the sun and moon with the pursuits of husbandry. It was Nature-worship, simple in its primary elements, but branching out into mythological fables, rich and diversified in proportion to the poetic genius of the people. This Nature-worship in its simpler, probably its earlier form, appears as a sort of dualism, in which two great antagonist powers, the creative and destructive, Light and Darkness, seem contending for the sovereignty of the world, and, emblematical of moral good and evil, are occupied in pouring the full horn of fertility and blessing, or the vial of wrath and misery, upon the human race. Subordinate to, or as a modification of, these two conflicting powers, most of the Eastern races concurred in deifying the active and passive powers of generation. The sun and the earth, Osiris and Isis, formed a second dualism. And it is remarkable how widely, almost universally extended throughout the earlier world, appears the institution of a solemn period of mourning about the autumnal, and of rejoicing about the vernal, equinox (2). The suspension, or apparent extinction of the great (3) vivifying power of nature, Osiris or Iacchus; the destitution of Ceres, Isis, or the Earth, of her husband or her beautiful daughter, torn in pieces or carried away into their realms by the malignant powers of darkness; their re-appearance in all their bright and fertilising energy; these, under different forms, were the great annual fast and festival of the early heathen worship (4). But the poets were the priests of this Nature-worship; and from their creative imagination arose the popular mythology, which gave its separate deity to every part of animate or inanimate being; and, departing still farther from the primitive allegory, and the symbolic forms under which the phenomena of the visible world were embodied, wandered into pure fiction; till nature-worship was almost supplanted by religious fable: and hence,

Tsabaism.

Nature-worship.

Poets.

(1) The astral worship of the East is ably and clearly developed in an Excursus at the end of Gesenius's *Isaiah*.

(2) Plutarch, de Iside et Osiride: — Φρύγες τὸν θεὸν αἰμαῖνοι χειμῶνος μὲν καθεύδειν, Σείρου δ' ἐξηγητοῖναι, τότε μὲν κατευνασμούς, τότε δ' ἀνεγέρσειν βακχεύοντες αὐτὰ τελοῦσι. Παφλαγῶνες δὲ καταδείσθαι καὶ καθείργυσθαι χειμῶνος, ἦρος δὲ ἀναλύσθαι φάσκουσι.

(3) Böhlen (das Alte Indien, p. 139 et seq.) gives a long list of these festivals of the sun. Löbeck (i. 690.) would altogether deny their symbolical character. It is difficult, however, to

account for the remarkable similarity between the usages of so many distinct nations in the New World as well as the Old, in Peru and Florida, in Gaul and Britain, as in India and Syria, without some such common origin. See Picart's large work *Cerémonies et Coutumes Religieuses, passim*.

Compare likewise Dr. Pritchard's valuable work on Egyptian Mythology; on the Deification of the Active and Passive Powers of Generation, the Marriage of the Sun and the Earth, p. 40, and pp. 62—75.

(4) Nam rudis ante illos, nullo discrimine, vita
In speciem conversa, operum ratione caret
Et stupefacta novo pendebat lumine mundi
Tum velut amissis macerans, tum letis rediit
Sideribus etc. MÆVIL 1. 6

by a natural transition, those who discerned God in every thing, multiplied every separate part of creation into a distinct divinity. The mind fluctuated between a kind of vague and unformed pantheism, the deification of the whole of nature, or its animation by one pervading power or soul, and the deification of every object which impressed the mind with awe or admiration (1). While every nation, every tribe, every province, every town, every village; every family, had its peculiar, local, or tutelar deity, there was a kind of common neutral ground on which they all met, a notion that the gods in their collective capacity exercised a general controlling providence over the affairs of men, interfered, especially on great occasions, and, though this belief was still more vague and more inextricably involved in fable, administered retribution in another state of being. And thus even the common language of the most polytheistic nations approached to monotheism (2).

Priestly
caste.

Wherever, indeed, there has been a great priestly caste, less occupied with the daily toils of life, and advanced beyond the mass of the people, the primitive nature-worship has been perpetually brought back, as it were, to its original elements; and, without disturbing the popular mythological religion, furnished a creed to the higher and more thinking part of the community, less wild and extravagant (3). In Persia the Magian order retained or acquired something like a pure theism, in which the Supreme Deity was represented under the symbol of the primal uncreated fire; and their Nature-worship, under the form of the two conflicting principles, preserved much more of its original simplicity than in most other countries. To the influence of a distinct sacerdotal order may be traced (4), in India, the singular union of the sublimest allegory,

(1) Some able writers are of opinion that the reverse of this was the case—that the variety was the primary belief; the simplification the work of a later and more intellectual age. On this point A. W. Schlegel observes, “The more I investigate the ancient history of the world, the more I am convinced that the civilised nations set out from a purer worship of the Supreme Being; that the magic power of Nature over the imagination of the successive human races, first, at a later period, produced polytheism, and, finally, altogether obscured the more spiritual religious notions in the popular belief; while the wise alone preserved within the sanctuary the primeval secret. Hence mythology appears to me the last developed and most changeable part of the old religion. The divergence of the various mythologies, therefore, proves nothing against the descent of the religions from a common source. The mythologies might be locally formed, according to the circumstances of climate or soil; it is impossible to mistake this with regard to the Egyptian myths.” Schlegel, p. 16. Preface to Pritchard’s Egyptian Mythology. My own views, considering the question in a purely historical light, coincide with those of M. Schlegel.

(2) This is strikingly expressed by a Christian writer:—“Audio vulgus cum ad celum manus tendunt, nihil aliud quam Deum dicunt, et Deus

magnus est, et Deus verus est, et si Deus dederit. Vulgi iste naturalis sermo est, an Christiani contentis oratio?” Min. Fel. Octavius. The same thought may be found in Cyprian, de Van. Idol., and Tertullian, Apolog.

(3) This is nowhere more openly professed than in China. The early Jesuit missionaries assert that the higher class (the *litteratorum secta*) despised the idolatry of the vulgar. One of the charges against the Christians was their teaching the worship of one God, which they had full liberty to worship themselves, to the *common people*:—“Non æque placere, rudem plebeculam rerum novarum cupiditate, celi Dominum venerari.” Trigault, Exped. in Sinar, pp. 438—575.

(4) “The learned brahmins adore one God, without form or quality, eternal, unchangeable, and occupying all space: but they carefully confine these doctrines to their own schools, as dangerous; and teach in public a religion, in which, in supposed compliance with the infirmities and passions of human nature, the deity is brought more to a level with our prejudices and wants. The incomprehensible attributes ascribed to him are invested with sensible and even human forms. The mind, lost in meditation, and fatigued in the pursuit of something, which, being divested of all sensible qualities, suffers the thoughts to wander without finding a resting-

and a sort of lofty poetical religious philosophy, with the most monstrous and incoherent superstitions; and the appearance of the profound political religion of Egypt in strange juxtaposition with the most debasing Fetichism, the worship of reptiles and vegetables (1).

From this Nature-worship arose the beautiful anthropomorphism of the Greeks, of which the Homeric poetry, from its extensive and lasting popularity, may in one sense be considered the parent. The primitive traditions and the local superstitions of the different races were moulded together in these songs, which, disseminated throughout Greece, gave a kind of federal character to the religion of which they were, in some sort, the sacred books. But the genius of the people had already assumed its bias: few, yet still some, vestiges remain in Homer of the earlier theogonic fables (2). Conscious, as it were, and prophetic of their future pre-eminence in all that constitutes the physical and mental perfection of our race, this wonderful people conformed their religion to themselves. The cumbrous and multiform idol, in which wisdom, or power, or fertility, were represented by innumerable heads or arms, or breasts, as in the Ephesian Diana, was refined into a being, only distinguished from human nature by its preterhuman development of the noblest physical qualities of man. The imagination here took another and a nobler course; it threw an ideal grandeur and an unearthly loveliness over the human form, and by degrees deities became men, and men deities, or, as the distinction between the godlike (*θεοεικλος*) and the divine (*θεϊος*) became more indistinct, were united in the intermediate form of heroes and demi-gods. The character of the people here, as elsewhere, operated on the religion; the religion re-acted on the popular character. The religion of Greece was the religion of the Arts, the Games, the Theatre; it was that of a race, living always in public, by whom the corporeal perfection of man had been carried to the highest point. In no other country would

Anthropomorphism
of the
Greeks.

place, is happy, they tell us, to have an object on which human feelings and human senses may again find repose. To give a metaphysical deity to ignorant and sensual men, absorbed in the cares of supporting animal existence, and entangled in the impediments of matter, would be to condemn them to atheism. Such is the mode in which the Brahmins excuse the gross idolatry of their religion." William Erskine, *Bombay Transactions*, i. 199. Compare Colebrooke, *Asiat. Res.* vii. 279.; and other quotations in Bohlen, *Das Alte Indien*, i. 153., which indeed might be multiplied without end. Mr. Mill (*Hist. of India*), among the ablest and most uncompromising opponents of the high view of Indian civilisation, appears to me not to pay sufficient attention to this point.

(1) Heeren has conjectured, with his usual ingenuity, or rather perhaps has adopted from De Brosses, the theory, that the higher part of the Egyptian religion was that of a foreign and dominant caste, the worship of plants and brutes,

the original undisturbed Fetichism of the primitive and barbarous African race. (Compare Von Hammer, *Geschichte der Assasien*, p. 57.) On the whole, I prefer this theory to that of Cicero (*Nat. Deor.* i. 36.), that it was derived from mere usefulness; to the political reason suggested by Plutarch (*de Isid. et Osir.*); to that of Porphyry (*de Abst.* iv. 9.), which, however, is adopted, and, I think, made more probable by Dr. Pritchard in his *Egyptian Mythology*, from the transmigration of the soul into beasts; of Marsham and Warburton, from hieroglyphics; of Lucian (*de Astrol.*) and Dupuis, from the connection with astronomy; or, finally, that of Bohlen (*Das Alte Indien*, i. 186.), who traces its origin to the consecration of particular animals to particular deities among their Indian ancestors.

(2) Nothing can be more groundless or unsuccessful than the attempt of later writers to frame an allegorical system out of Homer; the history and design of this change are admirably traced by Lobeck, *Aglaophamus*, i. 158

the legislator have taken under his protection the physical conformation, in some cases the procreation, in all the development of the bodily powers by gymnastic education; and it required the most consummate skill in the sculptor to preserve the endangered pre-eminence of the gods, in whose images were embodied the perfect models of power and grace and beauty (1).

Religion
of Rome.

The religion of Rome was political and military (2). Springing originally from a kindred stock to that of earlier Greece, the rural Gods of the first cultivators of Italy (3), it received many of its rites from that remarkable people, the Etruscans; and rapidly adapted itself, or was forced by the legislator into an adaptation to the character of the people (4). Mars or Gradivus was the divine ancestor of the race (5). The religious calendar was the early history of the people; a large part of the festivals was not so much the celebration of the various deities, as the commemoration of the great events in their annals (6). The priesthood was united with the highest civil and military offices; and the great occupation of Roman worship seems to have been to secure the stability of her constitution, and still more, to give a religious character to her wars, and infuse a religious confidence of success into her legionaries. The great office of the diviners, whether augurs or aruspices, was to choose the fortunate day of battle; the Fetiales, religious officers, denounced war: the standards and eagles possessed a kind of sanctity; the eagle was in fact a shrine (7). The altar had its place in the centre of the camp, as the ark of God in that of the Israelites. The Triumph may be considered as the great religious ceremony of the nation; the god Terminus, who never receded, was, as it were, the deified ambition of Rome. At length Rome herself was impersonated and assumed her rank in heaven, as it were the representative of the all-conquering and all-ruling republic.

Moral Ele-
ment of
Roman
Religion.

There was a stronger moral element in the Roman religion, than in that of Greece (8). In Greece the gods had been repre-

(1) Maximus Tyrius (Dissert. viii.) defends the anthropomorphism of the Greeks, and distinguishes it from the symbolic worship of barbarians, "If the soul of man is the nearest and most like to God, God would not have enclosed in an unworthy tabernacle that which bears the closest resemblance to himself." Hence he argues that God ought to be represented under the noblest form, that of man.

(2) Dionysius Halicarn compares the grave and serious character of the Roman as contrasted with the Greek religion. The Romans rejected many of the more obscene and monstrous fables of the Greeks. But it is as part of the civil polity that he chiefly admires the Roman religion, lib. ii. c. 7.

(3) The Palilia and other rural rites. The statues of the goddesses Seja and Segesta, of seed and of harvest, stood in the great Circus in the time of Pliny, II. N. xviii. 2.

(4) Beaufort's *Republique Romaine*, b. i. ch. 5. Compare the recent and valuable work of Waller, *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts* p. 177.

(5) Et tamen ante omnes Martem coluere priores, Hoc dederat studii bellica turba suis.

After reciting the national deities of other cities, the religious poet of Rome proceeds,

Mars Latio venerandus erat; quia præsedit armis, Arma feræ genti remque deusque dabant.

OVID, *Fasti*, iii. 97

The month of Mars began the year. *Ibid.*

(6) Compare the proportion of Roman and of religious legend in the *Fasti* of Ovid. See, likewise, Constant, I. 21, etc.

(7) Ὁ γὰρ ἀστὺς ἀνομασμίμος (ἐστὶ δὲ νεὸς μικρὸς) καὶ ἐν αὐτῷ ἀστὺς χρυσοῦς ἐνίσφυται, Dion. Cass. xl. c. 18. Gibbon, i. 16. Moyle's Works, ii. 86. Compare Tac. Ann. i. 39.

(8) The distinction between the Roman and Greek religions is drawn with singular felicity in the two supplemental (in my opinion the most valuable and original), but unfortunately, unfinished volumes of M. Constant, *Du Polythéisme Romain*.

sented, in their collective capacity, as the avengers of great crimes; a kind of general retributive justice was assigned to them; they guarded the sanctity of oaths. But in the better days of the republic, Rome had, as it were, deified her own virtues. Temples arose to Concord, to Faith, to Constancy, to Modesty (Pudor), to Hope. The Penates, the household deities, became the guardians of domestic happiness. Venus Verticordia presided over the purity of domestic morals (1), and Jupiter Stator over courage. But the true national character of the Roman theology is most remarkably shown in the various temples, and various attributes assigned to the good Fortune of the city, who might appear the Deity of Patriotism (2). Even Peace was at length received among the gods of Rome. And as long as the worship of the heart continued to sanctify these impersonations of human virtues, their adoration tended to maintain the lofty moral tone; but as soon as that was withdrawn, or languished into apathy, the deities became cold abstractions, without even that reality which might appear to attach itself to the other gods of the city: their temples stood, their rites were perhaps solemnised, but they had ceased to command, and no longer received the active veneration of the people. What, in fact, is the general result of the Roman religious calendar, half a year of which is described in the *Fasti* of Ovid? There are festivals founded on old Italian and on picturesque Grecian legends; others commemorative of the great events of the heroic days of the republic; others instituted in base flattery of the ruling dynasty; one ceremonial only, that of the Manes (3), which relates to the doctrine of another life, and that preserved as it were from pride, and as a memorial of older times. Nothing can show more strongly the nationality of the Roman religion, and its almost complete transmutation from a moral into a political power (4).

Amidst all this labyrinth, we behold the sacred secret of the divine Unity, preserved inviolate, though sometimes under the most adverse circumstances, and, as it were, perpetually hovering on the verge of extinction, in one narrow district of the world, the province of Palestine. Nor is it there the recondite treasure of a high and learned caste, or the hardly worked-out conclusion of the thinking and philosophical few, but the plain and distinct groundwork of the popular creed. Still, even there, as though in its earlier period, the yet undeveloped mind of man was unfit for the reception, or at least for the preservation of this doctrine, in its perfect

Religion
of the
Jews:

(1) The most virtuous woman in Rome was chosen to dedicate her statue, Val. Max. viii. 15.

(2) Constant, i. 16.

(3) Il. 533. The Lemuria (Remuria) were instituted to appease the shade of Remus, V. 451, etc.

Ovid applies on another occasion his general maxim

Pro magna teste vetustas
Creditor acceptam parce movere fidem.

Fasti, iv. 203

(4) See the fine description of *Maestas* (*Fasti*, 25—52.), who becomes at the end the tutelary deity of the senate and matrons, and presides over the triumphs of Rome.

God under
the old
and the
new Reli-
gion.

spiritual purity; as though the Deity condescended to the capacities of the age, and it were impossible for the divine nature to maintain its place in the mind of man, without some visible representative; a kind of symbolic worship still enshrines the one great God of the Mosaic religion. There is a striking analogy between the Shechinah (1) or luminous appearance which "dwelt between the cherubim," and the pure immaterial fire of the Theism, which approaches nearest to the Hebrew, that of the early Persians. Yet even here likewise is found the great indelible distinction between the religion of the ancient and of the modern world; the characteristic, which besides the general practice of propitiating the Deity, usually by animal sacrifices, universally prevails in the præ-Christian ages. The physical predominates over the moral character of the Deity. God is *Power* in the old religion, he is *Love* under the new. Nor does his pure and essential spirituality, in the more complete faith of the gospel, attach itself to, or exhibit itself under any form. "God," says the divine author of Christianity, "is a Spirit, and they that worship him, must worship him in spirit and in truth." In the early Jewish worship, it was the physical power of the Deity, which was presented to the mind of the worshipper: he was their temporal king, the dispenser of earthly blessings, famine and plenty, drought and rain, discomfiture or success in war. The miracles recorded in the Old Testament, particularly in the earlier books, are amplifications, as it were, or new directions of the powers of nature; as if the object were to show that the deities of other nations were but subordinate and obedient instruments in the hand of the great self-existent being, the Jehovah of Jewish worship.

Yet, when it is said that the physical rather than the moral character of the Deity *predominated*, it must not be supposed that the latter was altogether excluded. It is impossible entirely to dissociate the notion of moral government from that belief, or that propensity to believe, in the existence of a God implanted in the human mind; and religion was too useful an ally, not to be called in to confirm the consciously imperfect authority of human law. But it may be laid down as a principle, that the nearer the nation approaches to barbarism, the childhood of the human race, the more earthly are the conceptions of the Deity; the moral aspect of the divine nature seems gradually to develop itself with the development of the human mind. It is at first, as in Egypt and India, the prerogative of the higher class; the vulgar are left to their stocks and their stones, their animals and their reptiles. In the republican states of Greece, the intellectual aristocracy of the philosophers,

(1) Even if the notion of a visible Shechinah was of a later period, (note to Heber's Bampton Lectures, p. 278.); God was universally believed to have a local and personal residence behind the

veil, in the unapproachable Holy of Holies; and the imagination would thus be even more powerfully excited than by a visible symbol.

guarded by no such legally established distinction, rarely dared openly to assert their superiority; but concealed their more extended views behind a prudential veil, as a secret or esoteric doctrine, and by studious conformity to the national rites and ceremonies.

Gradually, however, as the period approaches, in which the religion of civilisation is to be introduced into the great drama of human life, as we descend nearer towards the point of separation between the ancient and modern world, the human mind appears expanding. Polytheism is evidently relaxing its hold upon all classes: the monarch maintains his throne, not from the deep-rooted, or rational, or conscientious loyalty of his subjects, but from the want of a competitor; because mankind were habituated to a government which the statesman thought it might be dangerous, and the philosopher, enjoying perfect toleration, and rather proud of his distinctive superiority, than anxious to propagate his opinions throughout the world, did not think it worth while, at the hazard of popular odium, to disturb.

Preparation for new Religion in the Heathen World.

Judaism gave manifest indications of a preparation for a more essentially spiritual, more purely moral faith. The symbolic presence of the Deity (according to their own tradition (1) ceased with the temple of Solomon; and the heathen world beheld with astonishment a whole race whose deity was represented under no visible form or likeness. The conqueror Pompey, who enters the violated temple, is filled with wonder at finding the sanctuary without image or emblem of the presiding deity (2); the poet describes them as worshipping nothing but the clouds and the divinity that fills the Heaven (3); the philosophic historian, whose profounder mind seems struggling with hostile prejudices, defines with his own inimitable compression of language, the doctrine to the sublimity of which he has closed his eyes. "The worship of the Jews is purely mental; they acknowledge but one God.—and that God supreme and eternal, neither changeable, nor perishable (4)". The doctrine of another life (which derived no sanction from the Law, and was naturally obscured by the more immediate and intelligible prospect of temporal rewards and punishments,) dawns in the prophetic writings; and from the apocryphal books and from Josephus, as well as from the writings of the New Testament, clearly appears to have become incorporated with the general sentiment. Retribution in another life has already taken the place of the immediate or speedy avenging or rewarding providence of the Deity in the land of Canaan (5).

Among the Jews.

Judaism however only required to expand with the expansion

(1) Hist. of the Jews, ii. 10.

(2) Ib. ii. 70.

(3) Nil præter nubes et cœli numen adorant. Juv. xiv. 97

(4) Judæi mente solâ, unumque numen intelli-

gunt. *** Summum illud et æternum, neque mutabile, neque interiturum. Tac. Hist. v. 5.

(5) See Chap. II., in which this question is resumed.

Expansion
of Juda-
ism.

of the human mind; its sacred records had preserved in its original simplicity the notion of the Divine Power; the pregnant definitions of the one great self-existing Being, the magnificent poetical amplifications of his might and providence were of all ages: they were eternal poetry, because they were eternal truth. If the moral aspect of the Divine nature was more obscurely intimated, and, in this respect, had assumed the character of a local or national Deity, whose love was confined to the chosen people, and displayed itself chiefly in the beneficence of a temporal sovereign: yet nothing was needed but to give a higher and more extensive sense to those types and shadows of universal wisdom; and improvement which the tendency of the age manifestly required; and which the Jews themselves, especially the Alexandrian school, had already attempted, by allegorising the whole annals of their people, and extracting a profound moral meaning from all the circumstances of their extraordinary history (1).

Effects of
progress
of know-
ledge up-
on poly-
theism.

But the progress of knowledge was fatal to the popular religion of Greece and Rome. The awe-struck imagination of the older race, which had listened with trembling belief to the wildest fables, the deep feeling of the sublime and the beautiful, which uniting with national pride, had assembled adoring multitudes before the Parthenon or the Jove of Phidias, now gave place to cold and sober reason. Poetry had been religion—religion was becoming mere poetry. Humanizing the Deity, and bringing it too near the earth, naturally produced, in a less imaginative and more reflecting age, that familiarity which destroys respect. When man became more acquainted with his own nature, the less was he satisfied with deities cast in his own mould. In some respects the advancement of civilisation had no doubt softened and purified the old religions from their savage and licentious tendencies. Human sacrifices had ceased (2), or had retired to the remotest parts of Germany, or to the shores of the Baltic (3). Though some of the secret rites were

Beneficial.

(1) Philo wrote for the unbelievers among his own people, and to conciliate the Greeks. (*De Conf. Linguar.* vol. i. p. 405.) The same principle which among the heathens gave rise to the system of Euhemerus, who resolved all mythology into history, and that of the other philosophers who attempted to reduce it to allegory, induced Philo, and no doubt his predecessor Aristobolus, thus to endeavour to accommodate the Mosaic history to an incredulous age, and to blend Judaism and Platonism into one harmonious system.

(2) Human sacrifices sometimes, but rarely, occur in the earlier periods of Grecian history. According to Plutarch, *Vit. Arist.* 9. and *Vit. Themistocles*, three sons of Sandauke, sister of the king of Persia, were offered, in obedience to an oracle, to Bacchus Omestes. The bloodstained altar of Diana of Tauris was placed by the tragedians in a barbarous region. Prisoners were sometimes slain on the tombs of warriors in much later times, as in the Homeric age, even on that

of Philopœmen. *Plut. Vit. Philop.* c. 21. Compare Tschirner, *Fall des Heidenthums*, p. 34.

Octavius is said (*Suet. Vit. Octav.*) to have sacrificed 300 Perugian captives on an altar sacred to the deified Julius (*Divo Julio*). This may be considered the sanguinary spirit of the age of proscriptions taking for once a more solemn and religious form. As to the libation of the blood of the gladiators, (see Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 9. *Scorpiac.* 7. *Cyprian, De Spectaculis.* Compare *Porphyr. de Abst.* *Lactant.* 1—21.) I should agree with M. Constant in ascribing this ceremony to the barbarity of the Roman amusements rather than to their religion. All public spectacles were, perhaps, to a certain degree religious ceremonies; but the gladiators were the victims of the sanguinary pleasures of the Roman people, not slain in honour of their gods. *Constant, iv.* 335. *Tschirner, p.* 45.

(3) *Tac. Ann.* i. 61. *Tac. Germ.* 10. 40. Compare on the gradual abolition of human sacrifices, *Constant, iv.* 330. The exception, which rests on

said to be defiled with unspeakable pollutions (1), yet this, if true, arose from the depravation of manners, rather than from religion. The orgies of the Bona Dea were a profanation of the sacred rite, held up to detestation by the indignant satirist, not as among some of the early Oriental nations, the rite itself.

But with the tyranny, which could thus extort from reluctant human nature the sacrifice of all humanity and all decency, the older religions had lost their more salutary, and, if the expression may be ventured, their constitutional authority. They had been driven away, or silently receded from their post, in which indeed they had never been firmly seated, as conservators of public morals. The circumstances of the times tended no less to loosen the bonds of the ancient faith. Peace enervated the deities, as well as the soldiers of Rome: their occupation was gone (2); the augurs read no longer the signs of conquest in the entrails of the victims; and though down to the days of Augustine (3), Roman pride clung to the worship of the older and glorious days of the republic, and denounced the ingratitude of forsaking gods, under whose tutelary sway Rome had become the empress of the world, yet the ceremonies had now no stirring interest; they were pageants in which the unbelieving aristocracy played their parts with formal coldness, the contagion of which could not but spread to the lower classes. The only novel or exciting rite of the Roman religion, was that which probably tended more than any other, when the immediate excitement was over, to enfeeble the religious feeling, the deification (4) of the

Prejudicial.

the authority of Pliny, xxviii. 2., and Plutarch, Vita Marii, in init. Quest. Rom., appears to me very doubtful. The prohibitory law of Lentulus, A.C. DCLVII. and Livy's striking expression, *more non Romano*, concerning the sacrifice said to be continued to a late period, as well as the edict of Tiberius, promulgated in the remoter provinces, indicate the general sentiment of the time. *Non satis estimari potest quantum Romanus debeat, qui sustulere monstra in quibus hominum occidere religiosissimum erat, mandu vero saluberrimum.* Plin. H. N. xxx. 1. See in Ovid, Fasti, iii. 341. the reluctance of Numa to offer human sacrifice. Hadrian issued an edict prohibiting human sacrifices; this was directed, according to Cruizer, (Symb. i. 363.), against the later Mithraic rites, which had reintroduced the horrible practice of consulting futurity in the entrails of human victims. The savage Commodus (Lamprid., in Comm.) offered a human victim to Mithra. The East, if the accounts are to be credited, continually reacted on the religion of Rome. Human sacrifices are said to have taken place under Aurelian (Aug. Hist. Vit. Aurel.), and even under Maxentius.

(1) The dissolute rites against which the Fathers inveigh were of foreign and Oriental origin—Isiac, Bacchanalian, Mithraic. Lobeck, i. 197. See Constant, vol. iv. c. 11. Compare the Confession of Hippala in Livy. I cannot refrain from transcribing an observation of M. Constant on these rites, which strikes me as extremely profound and just: "La mauvaise influence des

fables licencieuses commence avec le mépris et la ridicule verse sur ces fables. Il en est de même des cérémonies. Des rites indécents peuvent être pratiqués par un peuple religieux avec une grande pureté de cœur. Mais quand l'incrédulité atteint ces peuples, ces rites sont pour lui la cause et le prétexte de la plus révoltante corruption." Du Polyth. Rom. ii. 102.

(2) Our generals began to wage civil wars against each other, as soon as they neglected the auspices. Cic. Nat. Deor. ii. 3. This is good evidence to the fact; the cause lay deeper.

(3) This was the main argument of his great work, *de Civitate Dei*. It is no where more strongly expressed than in the oration of Symmachus to Theodosius. *Hic cultus in leges meas orbem redegit; hæc sacra Annibalem a moenibus, a Capitolio Sennonas repulerunt.* This subject will frequently recur in the course of our History.

(4) The deification of Augustus found some opponents. *Nilil Deorum honoribus relictum, cum se templis et effigie numinum, per flamines et sacerdotes coli vellet.* Tac. Ann. i. 10. The more sagacious Tiberius shrunk from such honours. In one instance, he allowed himself to be joined in divine honours with his mother and the senate, but in general he refused them. Tac. Ann. iv. 15. 37. v. 2. The very curious satire of Seneca, the *Ἀποκαλύπτεις*, though chiefly aimed at Claudius, throws ridicule on the whole ceremony. Augustus, in his speech to the gods, says, *Denique dum tales deos facitis, vobis vos deos esse credit,*

living, or the apotheosis of the dead emperor, whom a few years or perhaps a few days abandoned to the open execration or contempt of the whole people. At the same time that energy of mind, which had consumed itself in foreign conquest or civil faction, in carrying the arms of Rome to the Euphrates or the Rhine, or in the mortal conflict for patrician or plebeian supremacy, now that the field of military or civil distinction was closed, turned inward and preyed upon itself; or compressed by the iron hand of despotism, made itself a vent in philosophical or religious speculations. The noble mind sought a retreat from the degradation of servitude in the groves of the Academy, or attempted to find consolation for the loss of personal dignity, by asserting with the Stoic the dignity of human nature (1).

Philoso-
phy.

But Philosophy aspired in vain to fill that void in the human mind, which had been created by the expulsion or secession of religion. The objects of Philosophy were twofold, either—1. to refine the popular religion into a more rational creed; or 2. to offer itself as a substitute. With this first view it endeavoured to bring back the fables to their original meaning (2), to detect the latent truth under the allegoric shell: but in many cases the key was lost, or the fable had wandered so far from its primary sense, as to refuse all rational interpretation; and where the truth had been less encumbered with fiction, it came forth cold and inanimate: the philosopher could strip off the splendid robes in which the moral or religious doctrine had been disguised, but he could not instil into it the breath of life. The imagination refused the unnatural alliance of cold and calculating reason; and the religious feeling, when it saw the old deities reduced into ingenious allegories, sank into apathy; or vaguely yearned for some new excitement, which it knew not from what quarter to expect.

The last hopes of the ancient religion lay in the Mysteries. Of them alone the writers, about the time of the appearance of Christianity, speak with uniform reverence, if not with awe. They alone could bestow happiness in life, and hope in death (3). In

A later writer complains—*Aliquantum pari libidine in celestium numerum referuntur, agre exequiis digni.* Aur. Victor. *Cæsar*, in Gallieno. M. Ranke, in the first chapter of whose admirable work (*die Römischen Papste*) I am not displeased to find some coincidences of view, even of expression, with my own, seems to think that much of the strength of the old religion lay in the worship of the emperor. I am not disposed to think so ill of human nature.

(1) Cicero, no doubt, speaks the language of many of the more elevated minds when he states that he took refuge in philosophy from the afflictions of life at that dark period of civil convention. *Hortatus etiam est, ut me ad hæc conferrem, animi ægrotudo, magna et gravi commota injuria: cuius si majorem aliquam levationem reperire po-*

tuissem, non ad hæc potissimum confugissem. De Nat. Deor. i. 4.

(2) *Πραγμάτων ὑπ' ἀνθρωπίνης ἀσθενείας οὐ καθοραζόμενων σαφῶς εὐσχημονίστερος ἱρμηνεύς ὁ μῦθος.* Max. Tyr., Dissert. X. The whole essay is intended to prove that poetry and philosophy held the same doctrine about the gods. This process, it should be observed, though it had already commenced, was not carried to its height until philosophy and polytheism coalesced again, from the sense of their common danger, and endeavoured to array a system composed of the most rational and attractive parts of both, against the encroachments of Christianity.

(3) *Neque solum cum lætitiâ vivendi rationem accepimus, sed etiam cum spe meliore moriendi,*

these remarkable rites (1) the primitive Nature-worship had survived under a less refined and less humanized form; the original and more simple symbolic forms (those of the first agricultural inhabitants of Greece (2)) had been retained by ancient reverence: as its allegory was less intricate and obscure (3), it accommodated itself better with the advancing spirit of the age. It may indeed be questioned whether the Mysteries did not owe much of their influence to their secrecy, and to the impressive forms, under which they shadowed forth their more recondite truths (4). These, if they did not satisfy, yet kept the mind in a state of progressive and continued excitement. They were, if it may be so said, a great religious drama, in which the initiated were at once spectators and actors; where the fifth act was designedly delayed to the utmost possible point, and of this still suspended catastrophe, the dramatis personæ, the only audience, were kept in studied ignorance (5). The Mysteries had, perhaps, from an early period associated a moral (6) purport with their sacred shows; and with the progress of opinion, the moral would more and more predominate over the primitive religious meaning (7). Yet the morality of the Mysteries was apparently that of the ancient Nature-worship of the East. It taught the immortality of the soul, as a part of that vast system of nature, which, emanating from the Supreme Being, passed through a long course of deterioration or refinement, and at length returned and resolved itself into the primal source of all existence. But the Mysteries, from their very nature, could only act upon the public mind in a limited manner (8): directly they ceased to be mysteries they lost their power (9). Nor can it be

Cic. de Leg. ii. 14. The theory of Warburton on the Mysteries is now universally exploded; but neither, with the utmost deference to his erudition, can I enter altogether into the views of Lobeck. In my judgment his quotations do not bear him out, as to the publicity of the ceremonies; nor can I conceive that there was none, or scarcely any, secret.

— Vetabo qui Cereris sacrum
Vulgarit arcana; sub iisdem
Sit trahibus, fragilenque mecum
Solvat phasellum. Hoar. Carm. iii. 2.

(1) The theories of Maier, Warburton, Plessing, Boulanger, Dupuis, Meiners, Viljoison, P. Knight, Heeren, St. Croix, Creuzer, may be found briefly stated, Lobeck, l. 6. §. 8.

(2) Quibus explicatis, ad rationemque revocatis, rerum magis natura cognoscitur, quam deorum. Cic. de Nat. Deor. i. 42.

(3) See Varro's View of the Eleusinian Mysteries, preserved by Augustin, De Civ. Dei, vii. 15.

(4) Ἀγνοσία σιμνότης ἐπὶ τοιαύτων καὶ νύξ. διὰ τοῦτο πιστεύεται τὰ μυστήρια, καὶ ἄβυσσος σπύλαια διὰ τοῦτο ὀρύττεται, καιροὶ καὶ τόποι κρύπτειν ἰδιότεις ἀρρητούργιαν ἰνδύου. Synes. de Prov. Compare the splendid passage in Dio. Chrys. Orat. 12.

(5) Non semel quædam sacra traduntur. Eleusis servat, quod ostendat revisentibus. Rerum

natura, sacra sua non simul tradit. Initiatos nos credimus: in vestibulo ejus hæremus. Sen. Nat. Quæst. vii. 31. Ut opinionem suspensio cognitionis adificet, atque ita tantam mentis adhibere videantur, quantum præstruxerunt cupiditatem. Tert. ad Valent. c. 1.

(6) Pindar, Frag. 116. Sophocles. Fragm. Luc. LVIII. Isoc. Pan. VII. Plato, Men. *

(7) Even Lobeck allows this of the Eleusinian Mysteries—Sacerdotes interdum aliquid de metempsychosi dixisse largiar." i. 73.

(8) The Jews were forbidden to be initiated in the Mysteries. In the Greek text of the LXX, a text was interpolated or mistranslated (Deut. xxiii. 17.), in which Moses, by an anachronism not uncommon in the Alexandrian school, was made distinctly to condemn these peculiar rites of paganism.

(9) Philo demands why, if they are so useful, they are not public: "Nature makes all her most beautiful and splendid works, her heaven and all her stars for the sight of all; her seas, fountains, and rivers, the annual temperature of the air, and the winds, the innumerable tribes and races of animals, and fruits of the earth, for the common use of man—why then are the Mysteries confined to a few, and those not always the most wise and most virtuous?" This is the general sense of a long passage, vol. ii. p. 260. Ed. Mang.

doubted, that while the local and public Mysteries, particularly the greatest of all, the Eleusinian, were pure and undefiled by licentiousness, and, if they retained any of the obscene symbols, disguised or kept them in the back ground; the private and moveable mysteries, which, under the conduct of vagabond priests, were continually flowing in from the East, displayed those symbols in unblushing nakedness, and gave occasion for the utmost licence and impurity (1).

Philosophy.

II. Philosophy as a substitute for religion was still more manifestly deficient. For, in the first place, it was unable, or condescended not, to reach the body of the people, whom the progress of civilisation was slowly bringing up towards the common level; and where it found or sought proselytes, it spoke without authority, and distracted with the multitude of its conflicting sects the patient but bewildered inquirer (2). Philosophy maintained the aristocratic tone, which, while it declared that to a few elect spirits alone it was possible to communicate the highest secrets of knowledge, more particularly the mystery of the great Supreme Being, proclaimed it vain and unwise to attempt to elevate the many to such exalted speculations (3). "The Father of the worlds," says Plato in this tone, "it is difficult to discover, and, when discovered, it "is impossible to make him known to all." So, observes a German historian of Christianity, think the Brahmins of India. Plato might aspire to the creation of an imaginary republic, which, if it could possibly be realised, might stand alone, an unapproachable model of the physical and moral perfection of man; but the amelioration of the whole world, the simultaneous elevation of all nations, orders, and classes to a higher degree of moral advancement, would have been a vision from which even his imagination would have shrunk in despair. This remained to be conceived and accomplished by one who appeared to the mass of mankind in his own age, as a peasant of Palestine.

Varieties of philosophic systems.

It cannot be denied that, to those whom it deigned to address, philosophy was sufficiently accommodating; and whatever the bias of the individual mind, the school was open, and the teacher at hand, to lead the inquirer, either to the luxurious gardens of Epicurus, or among the loftier spirits of the Porch. In the two prevalent systems of philosophy, the Epicurean and the Stoic, appears a striking assimilation to the national character of the two predomi-

(1) The republic severely prohibited these practices, which were unknown in its earlier and better days. Dionys. Hal. ii. viii.

(2) Ὁρᾷς τὸ πλῆθος τῶν συνήματων; πᾶσι τῇς πράττειται; πῶς αὐτῶν κατελίσσονται; τίτι πεισθῶ τῶν παραγγελλομένων; Max. Tyr. xxv. sub fin.

(3) Neander has likewise quoted several of the same authorities adduced in the following pas-

sage. See the translation of Neander, which had not been announced when the above was written. It is curious that Strabo remarks, on another point, the similarity of the Indian opinions to Platonism, and treats them all as μύθοι: — Παραπλέκουσι δὲ καὶ μύθους, ὥσπερ καὶ Πλάτων, περὶ τῆς ἀσθαρσίας ψυχῆς, καὶ τῶν καθ' ἑδου κρίσεων καὶ ἀλλὰ τοιαῦτα. L. xv. p. 713.

nant races which constituted the larger part of the Roman world. The Epicurean, with its subtle metaphysics, its abstract notion of the Deity, its imaginative materialism, its milder and more pleasurable morals, and perhaps its propensity to degenerate into indolence and sensuality, was kindred and congenial to that of Greece, and the Grecian part of the Roman society. The Stoic, with its more practical character, its mental strength and self-confidence, its fatalism, its universally diffused and all-governing Deity, the soul of the universe (of which the political power of the all-ruling republic might appear an image), bore the same analogy to that of Rome. While the more profound thinkers, who could not disguise from themselves the insufficiency of the grounds on which the philosophical systems rested, either settled into a calm and contented scepticism, or with the Academics, formed an eclectic creed from what appeared the better parts of the rest.

Epicureanism according to Greek character;

Stoicism to Roman.

Academics.

Such on all the great questions of religion, the divine nature, providence, the origin and future state of the soul (1), was the floating and uncertain state of the human mind. In the department of morals, Philosophy nobly performed her part; but perhaps her success in this respect more clearly displayed her inefficiency. The height to which moral science was carried in the works of Cicero, Seneca, Epictetus, and Marcus Antoninus, while it made the breach still wider between the popular religion and the advanced state of the human mind, more vividly displayed the want of a faith, which would associate itself with the purest and loftiest morality; and remarkably, as it were, those thoughts and feelings, which connect man with a future state of being, to the practical duties of life (2).

For while these speculations occupied the loftier and more thinking minds, what remained for the vulgar of the higher and of the lower orders? Philosophy had shaken the old edifice to its base; and even if it could have confined its more profound and secret doctrines within the circle of its own elect, if its contempt for the old fables of the popular creed had been more jealously guarded, it is impossible but that the irreligion of the upper order must work downwards upon the lower. When religion has, if not avowedly, yet manifestly, sunk into an engine of state policy, its most imposing and solemn rites will lose all their commanding life and energy. Actors will perform ill who do not feel their parts. "It is marvelous," says the Epicurean in Cicero, "that one soothsayer (Ha-

Philosophy fatal to popular Religion.

(1) Augustin speaking of the great work of Varro concludes thus : — In hac totâ serie pulcherrimæ et subtilissimæ disputationis, vitam æternam frustra queri et sperari, facillime apparet. *Civ. Dei*, vi. 3.

(2) Gibbon and many other writers (*Law, Theory of Religion*, 127. 130.; *Sumner, Evidences*, p. 76.) have adduced the well-known passages from Sallust and Cicero, which indicate the general state of feeling on the great question

of the immortality of the soul. There is a striking passage in a writer, whose works have lately come to light through the industry of Angelo Mai. The author is endeavouring to find consolation for the loss of a favourite grandson : Si maximè esse animas immortales constet, erit hoc philosophis disserendi argumentum, non parvulus desiderandi remedium. *Front. de Nep. Amiss.*

ruspex), can look another in the face without laughing." And when the Epicurean himself stood before the altar, in the remarkable language of Plutarch, "he hypocritically enacted prayer and adoration from fear of the many; he uttered words directly opposite to his philosophy. While he sacrifices, the ministering priest seems to him no more than a cook, and he departs uttering the line of Menander, "I have sacrificed to Gods in whom I have no concern (1)."

Literature.

Unless indeed the literature as well as the philosophy of the age, immediately preceding Christianity, had been confined to the intellectual aristocracy, the reasoning spirit, which rejected with disdain the old imaginative fables, could not but descend at least as low as the rudiments of liberal education. When the gravest writers, like Polybius and Strabo, find it necessary to apologise to their more learned and thinking readers, for the introduction of those mythic legends, which formed the creed of their ancestors, and to plead the necessity of avoiding offence, because such tales are still sacred among the vulgar, this deference shows rather the increasing indifference, than the strength of popular opinion. "Historians," says the former writer, "must be pardoned, if for the sake of maintaining piety among the many, they occasionally introduce miraculous or fabulous tales; but they must not be permitted on these points to run into extravagance." "Religion," he declares in another passage, "would perhaps be unnecessary in a commonwealth of wise men. But since the multitude is ever fickle, full of lawless desires, irrational passions and violence, it is right to restrain it by the fear of the invisible world, and such tragic terrors. Whence our ancestors appear to have introduced notions concerning the Gods, and opinions about the infernal regions not rashly or without consideration. Those rather act rashly and inconsiderately who would expel them (2)." "It is impossible," observes the inquiring geographer, "to govern a mob of women, or the whole mixed multitude, by philosophic reasoning, and to exhort them to piety, holiness, and faith; we must also employ superstition with its fables and prodigies. For the thunder, the ægis, the trident, the torches, the serpents, the thyrsi of the Gods are fables, as is all the ancient theology; but the legislature introduced these things as bugbears to those who are children in understanding (3)." In short even when the Roman writers professed the utmost respect for the religious institutions of their country, there was a kind of silent protest against their sincerity. It was an evident, frequently an avowed, condescension to the prejudices of the vulgar. Livy admires the wisdom of Numa, who introduced the fear of the Gods,

(1) Quoted also by Neander from Plutarch.

(Non poss. suav. viv. sec. Epic.) I have adopted Reiske's reading of the latter clause.

(2) Polyb. vi. 56.

(3) Strabo, lib. i. p. 19.

as a "most efficacious means of controlling an ignorant and barbarous populace(1)." Even the serious Dionysius judges of religion according to its usefulness, not according to its truth, as the wise scheme of the legislator, rather than as the revelation of the Deity (2). Pausanias, while he is making a kind of religious survey of Greece, expressing a grave veneration for all the temples and rites of antiquity, frequently relating the miraculous intervention of the several deities (3), is jealous and careful lest he should be considered a believer in the fables which he relates(4). The natural consequence of this double doctrine was not unforeseen. "What," says the Academic in Cicero, "when men maintain all belief in the immortal Gods to have been invented by wise men for the good of the state, that religion might lead to their duty those who would not be led by reason, do they not sweep away the very foundations of all religion (5)?"

The mental childhood of the human race was passing away, at least it had become wearied of its old toy (6). The education itself, by which, according to these generally judicious writers, the youthful mind was to be impregnated with reverential feelings for the objects of national worship, must have been coldly conducted by teachers conscious that they were practising a pious fraud upon their disciples, and perpetually embarrassed by the necessity of maintaining the gravity befitting such solemn subjects, and of suppressing the involuntary smile, which might betray the secret of their own impiety. One class of fables seems to have been universally exploded even in the earliest youth, those which related to another life. The picture of the unrivalled satirist may be overcharged, but it corresponds strictly with the public language of the orator, and the private sentence of the philosopher :

The silent realm of disembodied ghosts,
The frogs that croak along the Stygian coasts ;
The thousand souls in one crazed vessel steer'd,
Not boys believe, save boys without a beard (7).

Even the religious Pausanias speaks of the immortality of the soul as a foreign doctrine, introduced by the Chaldeans and the Magi,

(1) H. R. i. 19.

(2) Ant. Rom. ii. 8, 9.

(3) Bœotica, 23.; Laconica, 4.

(4) Τοῦτον τὸν λόγον, καὶ ὅσα ἰοκῶτα εἰρηται, οὐκ ἀποδεχόμενος γράφω, γράφω δὲ οὐδὲν ἄλλου. Corinth. xvii. In another place he repeats that he gives the popular legend as he finds it. Arcad. viii.

(5) De Nat. Deor. i. 42.

(6) Gibbon has a striking sentence in his juvenile Essai sur la Littérature (Misc. Works, iv. 61.) "Les Romains étoient éclairés : cependant ces mêmes Romains ne furent pas choqués de voir réunir dans la personne de César un dieu,

un prêtre, et un athée." He adds atheist, as disbelieving with the Epicureans the providence of God.

(7) Esse aliquid manes et subterranea regna,
Et contemp, et Stygio ranas in gurgite nigras,
Atque una transire vadum tot millia cymba.
Nec pueri credunt nisi qui nondum aere lavantur
Pro Sat. ii. 149.

Nisi forte ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur, ut existimemus apud inferos impiorum supplicia perferre *** quæ si falsa sunt, id quod omnes intelligunt.—Cic. Pro Cluent. c. 61. Nemo tam puer est ut Cerberum timeat, et tenebras et larvarum habitum nudis ossibus coherentem. Mors nos aut consumit aut emittit. Sen. Ep. 24.

and embraced by some of the Greeks, particularly by Plato (1). Pliny, whose *Natural History* opens with a declaration that the universe is the sole Deity, devotes a separate chapter to a contemptuous exposure of the idle notion of the immortality of the soul, as a vision of human pride, and equally absurd, whether under the form of existence in another sphere, or under that of transmigration (2).

Recep-
tion of
Foreign
Religions.

We return then again to the question, what remained for minds thus enlightened beyond the poetic faith of their ancestors, yet not ripe for philosophy? how was the craving for religious excitement to be appeased, which turned with dissatisfaction or disgust from its accustomed nutriment? Here is the secret of the remarkable union between the highest reason and the most abject superstition which characterises the age of Imperial Rome. Every foreign religion found proselytes in the capital of the world; not only the pure and rational theism of the Jews, which had made a progress, the extent of which it is among the most difficult questions in history to estimate : but the Oriental rites of Phrygia, and the Isiac and Serapic worship of Egypt, which, in defiance of the edict of the magistrate (3) and the scorn of the philosopher, maintained their ground in the capital, and were so widely propagated among the provinces, that their vestiges may be traced in the remote districts of Gaul (4) and Britain (5); and at a later period the reviving Mithriac Mysteries, which in the same manner made their way into the western provinces of the empire (6). In the capital itself, every thing that was new, or secret, or imposing, found a welcome reception among a people that listened with indifference to philosophers who reasoned, and poets who embodied philosophy in the most attractive diction. For in Rome, poetry had forsworn the alliance of the old imaginative faith. The irreligious system of Euhemerus (7) had found a translator in Ennius; that of Epicurus was commended by the unrivalled powers of Lucretius. Virgil himself, who, as he collected from all quarters the beauties of ancient poetry, so he inlaid in his splendid tessellation the noblest images of the poetic faith of Greece : yet, though at one moment he transfuses mythology into his stately verse, with all the fire of an ardent votary, at

Poetry
ceases
to be
religious.

(1) *Messenica*, c. xxxii.

(2) *Lib. vii.* 55.

(3) See *anté*, p. 7.

(4) As late as the time of Julian, the son of a German king had changed his barbarous name of Agerario for that of Serapion, having been instructed in certain Mysteries in Gaul. *Amm. Marcell.* xvi. c. 12.

(5) I have been informed that in some recent excavations at York, vestiges of Isiac worship have been discovered.

(6) *Religions de l'Antiquité*, i. 363.; and note, 9. p. 743.

(7) Euhemerus either of Messina in Sicily or of Messene in Peloponnesus (he lived in the time

of Cassander king of Macedon), was of the Cyrenaic school of philosophy, and was employed on a voyage to the Red Sea by Cassander. But he was still more celebrated for his theologic innovation : he pretended to have discovered during this voyage on an island in the Eastern Ocean, called Panchaia, a register of the births and deaths of the gods inscribed on a golden column in the temple of the Triphyliau Jupiter. Hence he inferred that all the popular deities were mere mortals deified on account of their fame, or their benefactions to the human race. *Cic. de Nat. Deor.* i. 42. *Plut. de Isid. et Osir.* p. 421. *Brucker*, i. 604.

the next he appears as a pantheist, and describes the Deity but as the animating soul of the universe (1). An occasional fit of superstition crosses over the careless and Epicurean apathy of Horace (2). Astrology and witchcraft (3) led captive minds, which boasted themselves emancipated from the idle terrors of the avenging gods. In the *Pharsalia* of Lucan, which manifestly soars far above the vulgar theology, where the lofty Stoicism elevates the brave man who disdains, above the gods who flatter, the rising fortunes of Cæsar; yet in the description of the witch Erictho evoking the dead (the only purely imaginative passage in the whole rhetorical poem), there is a kind of tremendous truth and earnestness, which show that if the poet himself believed not "the magic wonders which he drew," at least he well knew the terrors that would strike the age in which he wrote.

The old established traders in human credulity had almost lost their occupation, but their place was supplied by new empirics, who swarmed from all quarters. The oracles were silent, while astrology seized the administration of the secrets of futurity. Pompey, and Crassus, and Cæsar, all consulted the Chaldeans (4), whose flattering predictions that they should die in old age, in their homes, in glory, so belied by their miserable fates, still brought not the unblushing science into disrepute. The repeated edicts which expelled the astrologers and "mathematicians" from Rome, was no less an homage to their power over the public mind, than their recall, the tacit permission to return, or the return in defiance of the insulted edict. Banished by Agrippa (5), by Augustus (6), by Tiberius (7), by Claudius (8), they are described in the inimitable language of Tacitus, as a race who, treacherous to those in power, fallacious to those who hope for power, are ever proscribed, yet will ever remain (9). They were at length taken under the avowed patronage of Vespasian and his successors (10). All these circumstances were manifest indications of the decay, and of the approaching dissolution of the old religion. The elegiac poet had read, not without sagacity, the signs of the times.

None sought the aid of foreign gods, while bow'd
Before their native shrines the trembling crowd (11).

(1) *Æn.* vi. 724. According to his life by Donatus Virgil was an Epicurean.

(2) *Insanientem dum sapientia
Consultus erro, nunc retrorsum
Vela dare, atque iterare cursus
Cogor relictos.*

And this because he heard thunder at noon-day.

(3) See the Canidia of Horace. According to Gibbon's just criticism, a "vulgar witch," the Erictho of Lucan, is "tedious, disgusting, but sometimes sublime." Note, ch. xxv. vol. iv. p. 239. It is the difference between the weird sisters in *Macbeth* and Middleton's "Witch," excepting of course the prolixity of Lucan.

(4) *Chaldeis sed major erit fiducia, quicquid
Dixerit astrologus, credent de fonte relatum
Hammonis; quoniam Delphi oracula cessant,
Et genus humanum damnat caligo futuri.*

Juv. vi. 553.

(5) *Dio.* xlix. c. 43.

(6) *Dio.* lvi. c. 25.

(7) *Tac. Ann.* ii. 32.

(8) *Tac. Ann.* xii. 52.

(9) *Genus hominum, potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostrâ et vetabitur semper et retinebitur.* *Tac. Hist.* i. 22.

(10) *Tac. Hist.* ii. 78. *Suet. in Vesp. Dio.* lxxviii. *Suet. in Dom.* xiv. xv.

(11) *Nulli cura fuit externos querere Divos,
Cum tremere patrio pendula turba foret*
Prior iv. 1-17

And thus, in this struggle between the old household deities of the established faith, and the half domiciliated gods of the stranger, undermined by philosophy, supplanted by still darker superstition, Polytheism seemed, as it were, to await its death-blow; and to be ready to surrender its ancient honours to the conqueror, whom Divine Providence should endow with sufficient authority over the human mind to seize upon the abdicated supremacy.

Revolution effected by Christianity.

Such is the state in which the ancient world leaves the mind of man. On a sudden a new era commences; a rapid yet gradual revolution takes place in the opinions, sentiments, and principles of mankind; the void is filled; the connection between religion and morals re-established with an intimacy of union yet unknown. The unity of the Deity becomes, not the high and mysterious creed of a privileged sacerdotal or intellectual oligarchy, but the common property of all whose minds are fitted to receive it: all religious distinctions are annihilated; the jurisdictions of all local deities abolished; and imperceptibly the empire of Rome becomes one great Christian commonwealth, which even sends out, as it were, its peaceful colonies into regions beyond the limits of the Imperial power. The characteristic distinction of the general revolution is this, that the physical agency of the Deity seems to recede from the view, while the spiritual character is more distinctly unfolded; or rather, the notion of the Divine Power is merged in the more prevailing sentiment of his moral Goodness. The remarkable passage in the Jewish history, in which God is described as revealing himself to Elijah, "neither in the strong wind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire, but in the still small voice," may be considered, we will not say prophetic, but singularly significant of the sensations to be excited in the human mind by the successive revelations of the Deity.

Immortality of the soul.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul partook in the same change with the notion of the Deity; it became at once popular, simple, and spiritual. It was disseminated throughout all orders of society: it admitted no aristocratic elysium of heroes and demigods, like that of the early Greeks (1); it separated itself from that earlier and widely prevalent form, which it assumed in the theogonies of the Nature-worship, where the soul emanating from the source of Being, after one or many transmigrations, was re-

Properitius may be considered in one sense the most religious poet of this period: his verses teem with mythological allusion, but it is poetical ornament rather than the natural language of piety; it has much of the artificial school of the Alexandrian Callimachus, his avowed model, nothing of the simplicity of faith which breathed in Pindar and Sophocles.

(1) It is curious to see, in another mythology, the same martial aristocratic spirit which, in the earlier religions, excluded the ἀμύθητα

καρπυα, the inglorious vulgar, from the seats of bliss, where Achilles and Diomed pursued their warlike amusements. It was not proper to appear poor before Odin; and it is very doubtful whether a poor man was thought worthy of any place in his dwellings, unless he came from the field of battle in the bloody train of some great chieftain. Slaves at least were distinctly excluded, and after death turned away from the doors of Valhalla. Geijer, Hist. of Sweden, Germ. Transl. i. 103.

absorbed into the Divine Essence. It announced the resurrection of all mankind to judgment, and the re-union of the spirit to a body, which, preserving the principle of identity, nevertheless should be of a purer and more imperishable nature. Such are the great primary principles, which became incorporated with the mind of man; and, operating on all human institutions, on the common sentiments of the whole race, form the great distinctive difference between the ancient and the modern, the European and the Asiatic world. During the dark ages there was a strong reaction of barbarism: in its outward form Christianity might appear to recede towards the polytheism of older times; and, as has been shown, not in a philosophic, but in a narrow polemic spirit of hostility to the Church of Rome, many of the rites and usages of heathenism were admitted into the Christian system; yet the indelible difference between the two periods remained. A higher sense and meaning was infused into these forms; God was considered in his moral rather than his physical attributes—as the Lord of the future as much or even more than of the present world. The saints and angels, who have been compared to the intermediate deities of the older superstitions, had, nevertheless, besides their tutelar power against immediate accidents and temporal calamities, an important influence over the state of the soul in the world to come; they assumed the higher office of ministering the hopes of the future, in a still greater degree than the blessings of the present life.

To the more complete development of this fact we shall descend in the course of our history, which will endeavour to trace all the modifications of Christianity, by which it accommodated itself to the spirit of successive ages; and by this apparently almost skilful, but in fact necessary condescension to the predominant state of moral culture, of which itself formed a constituent element, maintained its uninterrupted dominion. It is the author's object, the difficulty of which he himself fully appreciates, to portray the genius of the Christianity of each successive age, in connection with that of the age itself; entirely to discard all polemic views; to mark the origin and progress of all the subordinate diversities of belief; their origin in the circumstances of the place or time at which they appeared; their progress from their adaptation to the prevailing state of opinion or sentiment: rather than directly to confute error or to establish truth; in short, to exhibit the reciprocal influence of civilisation on Christianity, of Christianity on civilisation. To the accomplishment of such a scheme he is well aware, that besides the usual high qualifications of a faithful historian, is requisite, in an especial manner, the union of true philosophy with perfect charity, if indeed they are not one and the same. This calm, impartial, and dispassionate tone he will constantly endeavour, he

Design
of this
History.

Christian-
ity differ-
ent in
form in
different
periods of
civilisa-
tion.

dares scarcely hope, with such warnings on every side of involuntary prejudice and unconscious prepossession, uniformly to maintain. In the honesty of his purpose he will seek his excuse for all imperfection or deficiency in the execution of his scheme. Nor is he aware that he enters on ground pre-occupied by any writers of established authority, at least in our own country, where the History of Christianity has usually assumed the form of a History of the Church, more or less controversial, and confined itself to annals of the internal feuds and divisions in the Christian community, and the variations in doctrine and discipline, rather than to its political and social influence. Our attention, on the other hand, will be chiefly directed to its effects on the social and even political condition of man, as it extended itself throughout the Roman world, and at length entered into the administration of government and of law; the gradual manner in which it absorbed and incorporated into the religious commonwealth the successive masses of population, which, after having overthrown the temporal polity of Rome, were subdued to the religion of the conquered people; the separation of the human race into the distinct castes of the clergy and laity; the former at first an aristocracy, afterwards a despotic monarchy: as Europe sank back into barbarism, the imaginative state of the human mind, the formation of a new poetic faith, a mythology, and a complete system of symbolic worship; the interworking of Christianity with barbarism, till they slowly grew into a kind of semi-barbarous heroic period, that of Christian chivalry; the gradual expansion of the system, with the expansion of the human mind; and the slow, perhaps not yet complete, certainly not general, development of a rational and intellectual religion. Throughout his work the author will equally, or as his disposition inclines, even more diligently, labour to show the good as well as the evil of each phasis of Christianity; since it is his opinion that, at every period, much more is to be attributed to the circumstances of the age, to the collective operation of certain principles which grew out of the events of the time, than to the intentional or accidental influence of any individual or class of men. Christianity, in short, may exist in a certain form in a nation of savages as well as in a nation of philosophers, yet its specific character will almost entirely depend upon the character of the people who are its votaries (1). It must be considered, therefore, in constant connection with that character: it will darken with the darkness and brighten with the light of each succeeding century; in an ungenial time it will recede so far from its genuine and essential nature as scarcely to retain any

(1) By the accounts of Bruce, Salt, and recently of Pearce, the Christianity of Abyssinia may be adduced as an instance of the state to which it may be degraded among a people at a very low state of barbarism. The conversions

among the South Sea islanders, it will of course be remembered, were effected, and are still superintended by strangers in a very different stage of civilisation.

sign of its divine original : it will advance with the advancement of human nature, and keep up the moral to the utmost height of the intellectual culture of man.

While, however, Christianity necessarily submitted to all these modifications, I strongly protest against the opinion, that the *origin* of the religion can be attributed, according to a theory adopted by many foreign writers, to the gradual and spontaneous development of the human mind (1). Christ is as much beyond his own age, as his own age is beyond the darkest barbarism. The time, though fitted to receive, could not by any combination of prevalent opinions, or by any conceivable course of moral improvement, have *produced* Christianity. The conception of the human character of Jesus, and the simple principles of the new religion, as they were in direct opposition to the predominant opinions and temper of his own countrymen, so they stand completely alone in the history of our race; and, as imaginary no less than as real, altogether transcend the powers of man's moral conception. Supposing the gospels purely fictitious, or that, like the "Cyropædia" of Xenophon, they embody on a groundwork of fact the highest moral and religious notions to which man had attained, and show the utmost ideal perfection of the divine and human nature, they can be accounted for, according to my judgment, on none of the ordinary principles of human nature (2). When we behold Christ standing in the midst of the wreck of old religious institutions, and building, or rather at one word commanding to arise, the simple and harmonious structure of the new faith, which seems equally adapted for all ages—a temple to which nations in the highest degree of civilisation may bring their offerings of pure hearts, virtuous dispositions, universal charity,—our natural emotion is the recognition of the Divine goodness, in the promulgation of this beneficent code of religion; and adoration of that Being in whom that Divine goodness is thus embodied and made comprehensible to the faculties of man. In the language of the apostle, "God is in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself (3)."

Christianity not self-developed.

(1) This theory is sketched by no means with an unfair though unfriendly hand by Chateaubriand, *Études sur l'Histoire*; a book of which, I am constrained to add, the meagre performance contrasts strangely with the loftiness of its pretensions.

(2) Dirons-nous que l'histoire de l'Évangile est inventée à plaisir? Ce n'est pas ainsi qu'on invente : et les faits de Socrate, dont personne ne doute, sont bien moins attestés que ceux de Je-

sus-Christ. Au fond c'est reculer la difficulté sans la détruire; il seroit plus inconcevable que plusieurs hommes d'accord eussent fabriqué ce livre, qu'il ne l'est qu'un seul en a fourni le sujet. Et l'Évangile a des caractères de vérité si frappans, si parfaitement inimitables, que l'inventeur en seroit plus étonnant que le héros. Rousseau, *Emile*, liv. iv.

(3) 2 Cor. v. 19.

CHAPTER II.

LIFE OF JESUS CHRIST.—STATE OF JUDEA.—THE BELIEF IN THE MESSIAH.

Life of
Christ ne-
cessary to
a history
of Christi-
anity.

THE history of Christianity without the life of its Divine Author appears imperfect and incomplete, particularly considering the close connection of that life, not only with the more mysterious doctrines, but with the practical, and even political influence of the religion; for even its apparently most unimportant incidents have, in many cases, affected most deeply the opinions and feelings of the Christian world. The isolation of the history of Christ in a kind of sacred seclusion has no doubt a beneficial effect on the piety of the Christian, which delights in contemplating the Saviour, undisturbed and uncontaminated by less holy associations; but it has likewise its disadvantages, in disconnecting his life from the general history of mankind, of which it forms an integral and essential part. Had the life of Christ been more generally considered as intimately and inseparably connected with the progress and development of human affairs, with the events and opinions of his time, works would not have been required to prove his existence, scarcely perhaps the authenticity of his history. The real historical evidence of Christianity is the absolute necessity of his life, to fill up the void in the annals of mankind, to account for the effects of his religion in the subsequent history of man.

It is diffi-
culty.

Yet to write the life of Christ, though at first sight it may appear the most easy, is perhaps the most difficult task which an historian can undertake. Many Lives have been composed with a devotional, none at least to my knowledge, in this country (1), with an historic design; none in which the author has endeavoured to throw himself completely back into the age, when Jesus of Nazareth began to travel as the teacher of a new religion through the villages of Galilee; none which has attempted to keep up a perpetual reference to the circumstances of the times, the habits and national character of the people, and the state of public feeling; and thus, identifying itself with the past, to show the origin and progress of the new faith, as it slowly developed itself, and won its way through the adverse elements, which it encountered in Judea and the adjacent provinces. To depart from the evangelic simplicity in the relation of the facts would not merely offend the reverential feelings of the reader, but tend likewise to destroy the remarkable harmony between the facts and doctrines, which characterises the narrative of the Gospels, and on which their authenticity, as genuine historical

(1) See Appendix I., on the recent Lives of Christ.

documents, might to an intelligent mind be safely rested. The three first Gospels, unless written at a very early period, could scarcely have escaped the controversial, or at least argumentative tone, which enters into the later Christian writings, and with which the relation of St. John is imbued (1). The plan then which the author will pursue, will be to presume, to a certain degree, on the reader's acquaintance with the subject on which he enters: he will not think it necessary to relate at length all the discourses or even all the acts of Christ, but rather to interweave the historic illustration with the main events, disposed, as far as possible, in the order of time, and to trace the effect which each separate incident, and the whole course of the life of Jesus, may be supposed to have produced upon the popular mind. In short it will partake, in some degree, of the nature of an historical comment, on facts which it will rather endeavour to elucidate, than to draw out to their full length.

The days of the elder Herod were drawing to a close; his prosperous and magnificent reign was ending in darkness and misery, such as the deepest tragedy has rarely ventured to imagine. His last years had revealed the horrible, the humiliating secret, that the son, at whose instigation he had put to death the two noble and popular princes, his children by Mariamne the Asmonean, had almost all his life been over-reaching him in that dark policy, of which he esteemed himself the master; and now, as a final return for his unsuspecting confidence, had conspired to cut short the brief remainder of his days. Almost the last, and the most popular exercise of Herod's royal authority, was to order the execution of the perfidious Antipater. Fearful times! when the condemnation of a son by a father, and that father an odious and sanguinary tyrant, could coincide with the universal sentiment of the people! The attachment of the nation to the reigning family might have been secured, if the sons of Mariamne, the heiress of the Asmonean line, had survived to claim the succession: the foreign and Idumean origin of the father might have been forgotten in the national and splendid descent of the mother. There was, it should seem, a powerful Herodian party, attached to the fortunes of the ruling house; but the body of the nation now looked with ill-concealed aversion to the perpetuation of the Idumean tyranny in the persons of the sons of Herod. Yet to those who contemplated only the political signs of the times, nothing remained but the degrading alternative, either to submit to the line of Herod, or to sink into a Roman province. Such was to be the end of their long ages of national glory, such the hopeless termination of the national independence. But, notwithstanding the progress of Grecian opinions and manners, with which the politic Herod had endeavoured to

State of
Judea --
Herod the
Great.

Intrigues
and death
of Anti-
pater

Sons of
Herod.

counterbalance the turbulent and unruly spirit of the religious party, the great mass of the people, obstinately wedded to the law and the institutions of their fathers, watched with undisguised jealousy the denationalising proceedings of their king. This stern and inextinguishable enthusiasm had recently broken out into active resistance, in the conspiracy to tear down the golden eagle, which Herod had suspended over the gate of the temple (1). The signal for this daring act had been a rumour of the king's death; and the terrific vengeance, which, under a temporary show of moderation, Herod had wreaked on the offenders, the degradation of the high-priest, and the execution of the popular teachers, who were accused of having instigated the insurrection, could not but widen the breach between the dying sovereign and the people. The greater part of the nation looked to the death of Herod with a vague hope of liberation and independence, which struck in with the more peculiar cause of excitement predominant in the general mind.

General
expecta-
tion of the
Messiah.

For the principle of this universal ferment lay deeper than in the impatience of a tyrannical government, which burdened the people with intolerable exactions, or the apprehension of national degradation, if Judæa should be reduced to the dominion of a Roman proconsul: it was the confidence in the immediate coming of the *Messiah*, which was working with vague and mysterious agitation in the hearts of all orders (2). The very danger to which Jewish independence was reduced, was associated with this exalted sentiment; the nearer the ruin, the nearer the restoration of their Theocracy. For there is no doubt, that among other predictions, according to the general belief, which pointed to the present period, a very ancient interpretation of the prophecy, which declared that the sceptre, the royal dominion, should not depart from the race of Israel, until the coming of the Shiloh, one of the titles uniformly attributed to the Messiah, connected the termination of the existing polity with the manifestation of the Deliverer (3). This expectation of a wonderful revolution to be wrought (4) by the sudden appearance of some great mysterious person, had been so widely disseminated, as to excite the astonishment, perhaps the jealousy of the

(1) Hist. of the Jews, vol. ii. p. 124.

(2) Whoever is curious in such inquiries, will find a fearful catalogue of calamities, which were to precede, according to the Rabbinical authorities, the coming of the Messiah, either in Lightfoot's *Harmony*, vol. v. p. 186. (8vo. edit.), or in Schoetgen, *Horæ Hebraicæ*, vol. ii. p. 509., or Ebnmenger, *das entdeckte Judenthum*, ii. p. 711. The notion may have been grounded on the last chapter of the Prophecy of Daniel. Compare Bertholdi, c. 13.—The Rabbins deliver, "In the first year of that week (of years), that the Son of David is to come, shall that be fulfilled, 'I will rain upon one city, but I will not rain upon another.'" Amos, iv. 7.—"The second year the arrows of famine shall be sent forth. The third,

the famine shall be grievous, and men and women and children, holy men and men of good works, shall die; and there shall be a forgetfulness of the Law among those that learn it. The fourth year fulness and not fulness. The fifth year great fulness: they shall eat, and drink, and rejoice, and the Law shall return to its scholars. The sixth year, voices." (The gloss is, "a fame shall be spread that the Son of David comes, or 'they shall sound with the trumpet.'") "The seventh year, wars; and in the going out of that year, the Son of David shall come." Lightfoot, xi. 421.

(3) Casaubon exercit., anti-Bacon, ii.

(4) 2 Esdras, vi. 25.

Romans, whose historians, Suetonius and Tacitus, as is well known, bear witness to the fact, "Among many," writes the latter, "there was a persuasion, that in the ancient books of the priesthood it was written, that at this precise time, the East should become mighty, and that the sovereigns of the world should issue from Judæa(1)." "In the East, an ancient and consistent opinion prevailed, that it was fated there should issue, at this time, from Judæa, those who should obtain universal dominion(2)."

Yet no question is more difficult than to ascertain the origin, the extent, the character of this belief, as it prevailed at the time of our Saviour's coming;—how far it had spread among the surrounding nations; or how far, on the other hand, the original Jewish creed, formed from the authentic prophetic writings, had become impregnated with Oriental or Alexandrian notions. It is most probable, that there was no consistent, uniform, or authorised opinion on the subject: all was vague and indefinite; and in this vagueness and indefiniteness lay much of its power over the general mind(3). Whatever purer or loftier notions concerning the great Deliverer and Restorer, might be imparted to wise and holy men, in whatever sense we understand that "Abraham rejoiced to see the day" of the Messiah, the intimations on this subject in the earlier books of the Old Testament, though distinctly to be traced along its whole course, are few, brief, and occurring at long intervals. But from the time, and during the whole period of the Prophets, this mysterious Being becomes gradually more prominent. The future dominion of some great king, to descend from the line of David, to triumph over all his enemies, and to establish an universal kingdom of peace and happiness, of which the descriptions of the golden age in the Greek poets are but a faint and unimagined transcript: the promise of the Messiah, in short, comes more distinctly forward. As early as the first chapters of Isaiah, he appears to assume a title and sacred designation, which at least approaches near to that of the Divinity(4); and in the later prophets, not merely does this leading characteristic maintain its place, but under the splendid poetical imagery, drawn from existing circumstances, there seems to lie hid a more profound meaning, which points to some great and general moral revolution, to be achieved by this mysterious Being.

But their sacred books, the Law and the Prophets, were not the

Nature of
the belief
in the
Messiah.

The Pro-
phets.

Tradition.

(1) Tac. Hist. v. 13.

(2) Suet. Ves. p. 4.

(3) The Jewish opinions concerning the Messiah have been examined with great diligence and accuracy by Professor Bertholdt, in his *Christologia Judæorum*. Bertholdt is what may be called a moderate Rationalist. To his work, and to Lightfoot, Schoetgen, Meuschen, and Eisenmenger, I am indebted for most of my Rabbinical quotations.

(4) Such is the opinion of Rosenmüller (on Isaiah, ix. 5. Compare likewise, on Psalm xlv. 7). On a point much contested by modern scholars, Gesenius, in his note on the same passages, espouses the opposite opinion. Neither of these authors, it may be added, discuss the question on theological, but purely on historical and critical grounds.

clear and unmingled source of the Jewish opinions on this all-absorbing subject. Over this, as over the whole system of the law, tradition had thrown a veil; and it is this traditionary notion of the Messiah, which it is necessary here to develop: but from whence tradition had derived its apparently extraneous and independent notions, becomes a much more deep and embarrassing question (1). It is manifest from the Evangelic history (2), that although there was no settled or established creed upon the subject, yet there was a certain conventional language: particular texts of the sacred writings were universally recognised, as bearing reference to the Messiah; and there were some few characteristic credentials of his title and office, which would have commanded universal assent.

Foreign
connec-
tions of
the Jews.

There are two quarters from which the Jews, as they ceased to be an insulated people, confined in the narrow tract of Palestine, and by their captivity and migrations became more mingled with other races, might insensibly contract new religious notions, the East and the West, Babylonia and Alexandria. The latter would be the chief, though not perhaps the only channel, through which the influence of Grecian opinions would penetrate into Palestine (3); and of the Alexandrian notions of the Messiah, we shall hereafter adduce two competent representatives, the author of the Book of Wisdom and Philo. But the East no doubt made a more early, profound, and lasting impression on the popular mind of the Jews. Unfortunately in no part does history present us with so melancholy a blank, as in that of the great Babylonian settlement of the people of Israel. Yet its importance in the religious, and even in the civil, affairs of the nation cannot but have been very considerable. It was only a small part of the nation which returned with the successive remigrations under Ezra and Nehemiah to their native land; and, though probably many of the poorer classes had remained behind at the period of the Captivity, and many more returned singly or in small bodies, yet on the other hand it is probable, that the tide of emigration, which at a later time was per-

Baby-
lonia.

(1) Bertholdt, p. 8.

(2) The brief intimations in the Gospels are almost the only absolutely certain authorities for the nature of this belief, at that particular period, except, perhaps, the more genuine part of the Apocrypha. Josephus, though he acknowledges the existence and the influence of this remarkable feature in the national character, is either inclined to treat it as a popular delusion, or to warp it to his own purposes, its fulfilment in the person of Vespasian. For his own school, Philo is a valuable witness; but among the Alexandrian Jews, the belief in a personal Messiah was much more faint and indistinct than in Palestine. The Rabbinical books, even the oldest Targumim or comments on the Sacred Writings, are somewhat suspicious, from the uncertainty of their date: still, in this as in other points of

coincidence, where their expressions are similar to those of the Christian records, there seems so manifest an improbability that these should have been adopted after the two religions had assumed an hostile position towards each other, that they may be fairly considered as vestiges of an earlier system of opinions, retained from ancient reverence, and indelible even by implacable animosity. It is far more likely that Christianity should speak the current language of the time, than that the Synagogue should interpolate their own traditionary records, with terms or notions borrowed from the Church.

(3) Even as early as the reign of Antiochus the Great, certain Jews had attempted to introduce Grecian manners, and had built a Grecian school or gymnasium at Jerusalem. 1 Mac. i. 71. 16. 2 Mac. ii. 4, 11, 12.

petually flowing from the valleys of Palestine into Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and even more remote regions, would often take the course of the Euphrates, and swell the numbers of the Mesopotamian colony. In the great contest between Alexander and the Persian monarchy, excepting from some rather suspicious stories in Josephus, we hear less than we might expect of this race of Jews (1). But as we approach the era of Christianity, and somewhat later, they emerge rather more into notice. While the Jews were spreading in the West, and no doubt successfully disseminating their Monotheism in many quarters, in Babylonia their proselytes were kings; and the later Jewish Temple beheld an Eastern queen (by a singular coincidence, of the same name with the celebrated mother of Constantine, the patroness of Christian Jerusalem) lavishing her wealth on the structure on Mount Moriah, and in the most munificent charity to the poorer inhabitants of the city. The name of Helena, queen of the Adiabeni, was long dear to the memory of the Jews; and her tomb was one of the most remarkable monuments near the walls of the city. Philo not only asserts that Babylon and other Eastern satrapies were full of his countrymen (2), but intimates that the apprehension of their taking up arms in behalf of their outraged religion and marching upon Palestine, weighed upon the mind of Petronius, when commanded, at all hazards, to place the statue of Caligula in the Temple (3). It appears from some hints of Josephus, that during the last war, the revolted party entertained great hopes of succour from that quarter (4); and there is good ground for supposing that the final insurrection in the time of Hadrian was connected with a rising in Mesopotamia (5). At the same period the influence of this race of Jews on the religious character of the people is no less manifest. Here was a chief scene of the preaching of the great apostle (6) :

(1) There may be truth in the observation of St. Croix : " Les Grecs et les Romains avaient tant de haine et de mépris pour le peuple juif, qu'ils affectaient n'en pas parler dans leurs écrits." (Historiens d'Alex. p. 555.) This, however, would apply only to the later writers, which are all we now possess; but if in the contemporary historians there had been much more, it would probably, at least if to the credit of his countrymen, have been gleaned by Josephus.

(2) See on the numbers of the Jews in the Asiatic provinces, particularly Armenia; at a later period (the conquest of Armenia by Sapor, A. D. 367.) St. Martin's additions to Le Beau's Hist. du Bas Empire. The death of this valuable writer, it is to be feared, will deprive the learned world of his promised work on the History of the Birth and Death of Jesus Christ, which was to contain circumstantial accounts of the Jews beyond the Euphrates.

Of the different races of Jews mentioned in the Acts, as present in Jerusalem, four are from this quarter:—Parthians, Medes, Elamites, dwellers in Mesopotamia.

(3) Leg. ad Caium, vol. ii. p. 578. Edit. Mang.

(4) Dio (or Xiphilin) asserts that they received considerable succours from the East. L. lxvi. c. 4.

(5) Hist. of Jews, iii. 108. etc.

(6) Nothing but the stubborn obstinacy of controversy could have thrown a doubt on the plain date in the first Epistle of St. Peter (v. 13.). Philo, in two places (ii. p. 578. 587.), Josephus in one (Ant. xviii. 9. 8.), expressly name *Babylon* as the habitation of the great Eastern settlement. It is not certain whether the city was then entirely destroyed (Gesenius on Isaiah, xiii. 22.), but in fact the name was extended to the province or satrapy. But it was equally the object of the two great conflicting parties in Christianity to identify Rome with Babylon. This fact established, the Roman Catholic had an unanswerable argument to prove the contested point of St. Peter's residence in the Western metropolis; Babylon therefore was decided to mean pagan Rome. The Protestant at once concurred, for if Rome was Babylon, it was the mystic spiritual Babylon of the Apocalypse. The whole third chapter of the second Epistle appears to me full of Oriental allusions, and the example of Balaam

and we cannot but think, that its importance in early Christian history, which has usually been traced almost exclusively in the West, has been much underrated. Hence came the mystic Cabala (1) of the Jews, the chief parent of those gnostic opinions, out of which grew the heresies of the early Church : here the Jews, under the Prince of the captivity, held their most famous schools, where learning was embodied in the Babylonian Talmud ; and here the most influential heresiarch, Manes, attempted to fuse into one system the elements of Magianism, Cabalism, and Christianity. Having thus rapidly traced the fortunes of this great Jewish colony, we must reascend to the time of its first establishment.

Cabala.

From a very early period the Jews seem to have possessed a Cabala, a traditionary comment or interpretation of the sacred writings. Whether it existed before the Captivity, it is impossible to ascertain ; it is certain that many of their books, even those written by distinguished prophets, Gad and Iddo, were lost at that disastrous time. But whether they carried any accredited tradition to Babylonia, it seems evident, from the Oriental cast which it assumed, that they either brought it from thence on their return to their native land, or received it subsequently during their intercourse with their Eastern brethren (2). Down to the Captivity the Jews of Palestine had been in contact only with the religions of the neighbouring nations, which, however differently modified, appear to have been essentially the same, a sort of Nature-worship, in which the host of Heaven, especially the sun and moon, under different names, Baal and Moloch, Astarte and Mylitta, and probably as symbols or representatives of the active and passive powers of nature, no doubt with some distinction of their attributes, were the predominant objects. These religions had long degenerated into cruel or licentious superstitions ; and the Jews, in falling off to the idolatry of their neighbours, or introducing foreign rites into their own religious system, not merely offended against the great primal distinction of their faith, the unity of the godhead, but sunk from the pure, humane, and comparatively civilised institutes of their lawgiver, to the loose and sanguinary usages of barbarism. In the East, however, they encountered a religion of a far nobler and more regular structure (3) : a religion which offered no temptation to idolatrous practices ; for the Magian rejected, with the devout abhorrence of the followers of Moses, the exhibition of the Deity in the human form ; though it possessed a rich store of mythological and symbolical figures, singularly analogous to those which may be considered the poetic machinery of the later

Syrian Religions.

Religion of Persia.

seems peculiarly appropriate if written in that region.

Lucan's "*Cumque superba foret Babylon splendida*" may indeed be mere poetic licence, or may allude to Seleucia.

(1) Cabala is used here in its most extensive sense. See Chiarini, p. 97.

(2) Mosheim, *De Rebus Christ.* ii. 18.

(3) *In Asia Persarum religionem ceteris esse nobiliorem.* Mosheim, *Inst.* p. 58., and Grot. *de Ver.* ii. 10.

Hebrew prophets (1). The religion of Persia seems to have held an intermediate rank between the Pantheism of India, where the whole universe emanated from the Deity, and was finally to be reabsorbed into the Deity, and the purer Theism of the Jews, which asserted the one omnific Jehovah, and seemed to place a wide and impassable interval between the nature of the Creator and that of the created being. In the Persian system, the Creation owed its existence to the conflicting powers of evil and good. These were subordinate to, or proceeding from, the Great Primal Cause (Zeruanes Akereh), Time without bounds (2), which in fact appears, as Gibbon observes, rather as a metaphysical abstraction, than as an active and presiding deity. The Creation was at once the work and the dominion of the two antagonist creators, who had balanced against each other in perpetual conflict a race of spiritual and material beings, light and darkness, good and evil. This Magianism, subsequent to the Jewish Captivity (3), and during the residence of the captives in Mesopotamia, either spread with the conquests of the Persians, from the regions farther to the east, Aderbajan and Bactria, or was first promulgated by Zoroaster, who is differently represented as the author or as the reformer of the faith. From the remarkable allusions or points of coincidence between some of the Magian tenets and the Sacred Writings (4), Hyde and Prideaux laboured to prove that Zoroaster (5) had been a pupil of Daniel, and derived those notions, which seem more nearly allied to the purer Jewish faith, from his intercourse with the Hebrew prophet, who held a high station under the victorious Medo-Persian monarchy (6). But, in fact, there is such an originality

Complete
ness of
Zoroastri-
an system.

(1) This, it may be observed, has no connection whatever with the originality or authority of these predictions. It should be borne in mind, that in these visions it is the moral or religious meaning alone which can be the object of faith, not the figures through which that meaning is conveyed. There is no reason why the images of Daniel and Ezekiel should not be derived from, or assimilate to, the prevalent fictions around them, as well as those of the rustic Amoz be chiefly drawn from pastoral or rural life. See, e.g., Chiarini's curious theory about the chariot of Ezekiel. Preface to Talmud, p. 90, and 101.

(2) So translated by Du Perron and Kleuker. There is a learned dissertation of Foucher on this subject. Acad. des Ins. vol. xxix. According to Bohlen it is analogous to the Sanskrit Sarvam akaranam, the Uncreated Whole; according to Fred. Schlegel, Sarvam akharyam, the Unum indivisible.

(3) The appearance of the Magian order, before the conquest of Babylon by the Medo-Persian Kings, is an extremely difficult question. Nebuchadnezzar's army was attended (Jer. xxxix 3) by Nergal-sharezer, the Rab-mag, רב כּוּן (Archimagus). Compare Bertholdt, Daniel Excurs. iii.

(4) Isaiah, xlvii. 7.

(5) The name of Zoroaster (Zerotoash), has been deduced from works signifying "the star

of gold," or "the star of splendour," and may have been a title or appellative.

(6) The hypothesis which places Zoroaster under the reign of Darius Hystaspes, identified with the Gushtasp of Persian mythological history, is maintained by Hyde, Prideaux, Anquetil du Perron, Kleuker, Herder, Goerre, Malcolm, Von Hammer, and apparently by De Guignaut. The silence of Herodotus appears to me among the strongest objections to this view.

Foucher, Tychem, Heeren, and recently Holty, identify Gushtasp with Cyaxares I., and place the religious revolution under the previous Median dynasty.

A theory which throws Zoroaster much higher up into antiquity is developed with great ability by Rhodé, in his Heilige Sage. The earlier date of the Persian prophet has likewise been maintained by Moyle, Gibbon, and Volney.

These views may in some degree be reconciled by the supposition that it was a reformation, not a primary development of the religion which took place under the Medo-Persian, or the Persian monarchy. The elements of the faith and the caste of the Magi were, I should conceive, earlier. The inculcation of agricultural habits on a people emerging from the pastoral life, so well developed by Heeren, seems to indicate a more ancient date. Consult also Gesenius on Isaiah. lxxv. 5. Constant, sur la Religion, ii. 187

and completeness in the Zoroastrian system, and in its leading principles, especially that of the antagonist powers of good and evil, it departs so widely from the ancient and simple Theism of the Jews, as clearly to indicate an independent and peculiar source, at least in its more perfect development; if it is not, as we are inclined to believe, of much more ancient date, and native to a region much further to the east than the Persian court, where Zoroaster, according to one tradition, might have had intercourse, in his youth, with the prophet Daniel.

The Zendavesta.

If, as appears to be the general opinion of the continental writers, who have most profoundly investigated the subject, we have authentic remains, or at least records which, if of later date, contain the true principles of Magianism, in the Liturgies and Institutes of the Zendavesta (1); it is by no means an improbable source in which we might discover the origin of those traditional notions of the Jews, which were extraneous to their earlier system, and which do not appear to rest on their sacred records (2). It is undoubtedly remarkable, that among the Magian tenets, we find so

(1) It may be necessary, in this country, briefly to state the question as to the authenticity or value of these documents. They were brought from the East by that singular adventurer, Anquetil du Perron. Sir W. Jones, in a letter, not the most successful of the writings of that excellent and accomplished man, being a somewhat stiff and laboured imitation of the easy irony of Voltaire, threw a shade of suspicion over the character of Du Perron, which in England has never been dispelled, and, except among Oriental scholars, has attached to all his publications. Abroad, however, the antiquity of the Zendavesta, at least its value as a trustworthy record of the Zoroastrian tenets, has been generally acknowledged. If altogether spurious, those works must be considered as forgeries of Du Perron. But, I., they are too incomplete and imperfect for forgeries; if it had been worth Du Perron's while to fabricate the Institutes of Zoroaster, we should, no doubt, have had something more elaborate than several books of prayers, and treatises of different ages, from which it required his own industry, and that of his German translator, Kleuker, to form a complete system. II. Du Perron must have forged the language in which the books are written, as well as the books themselves. But the Zend is universally admitted by the great Orientalists and historians of language to be a genuine and very curious branch of the Eastern dialects. (See Hopp, *Vergleichende Grammatik*.) It should be added, that the publication of the Zendavesta, in the original, has been commenced by M. Bournouf in Paris, and by M. Olshausen in Germany.

III. These documents may be considered as more modern compilations, of little greater authority than the Sadder, which Hyde translated from the modern Persian. That they are of the age of Zoroaster, it may be difficult to prove; but their internal evidence, and their coincidence with the other notices of the Persian religion, scattered among the writings of the Greeks and Romans (see du Perron's and Kleuker's illustrations, especially the Persica of the latter),

afford sufficient ground for supposing that they contain the genuine and unadulterated elements of the Zoroastrian faith, and, if not of primitive, are of very high antiquity. The traces of Mahometanism, which Brucker (vol. vi. p. 68) supposed that he had detected, and which are apparent in the Sadder, are rather notions borrowed by Mahomet from the Jews; but whence obtained by the Jews, is the question. Mr. Erskine, the highest authority on such subjects, considers the existing Zendavesta to have been compiled in the age of Ardeshir Babhegan, the great restorer of the Magian faith. (Bombay Transactions.) In Professor Neuman's translation of Vartan there is a curious sentence, which seems to intimate that the books of the Magian faith either did not exist at that time, or were inaccessible to the generality.

IV. A thought has sometimes crossed my own mind (it has been anticipated by Du Perron), whether they can be the sacred books of a sect formed from an union of Gnostic or Manichæan Christianity with the ancient Persian religion. But there is no vestige of purely Christian tradition; and those points in which Parseism seems to coincide with Christianity are integral and inseparable parts of their great system. And against all such opinions must be weighed the learned paper of Professor Rask, who gives strong reasons for the antiquity both of the language and of the books. The language he considers the vernacular tongue of ancient Media. (Trans. of Asiatic Society, iii. 524.) Still, while I appeal to the Zendavesta as authority, I shall only adduce the more general leading principles of the faith, of which the antiquity appears certain; and rarely any tenet for which we have not corroborative authority in the Greek and Latin writers. The testimonies of the latter have been collected both by Du Perron and Kleuker.

(2) Mosheim has traced with brevity, but with his usual good sense and candour, this analogy between the traditional notions of the Jews and those of the Magians. *De Reb. ant. Const. M. ii. 7.*

many of those doctrines, about which the great schism in the Jewish popular creed, that of the traditionalists and antitraditionalists, contended for several centuries. It has already been observed, that in the later prophetic writings, many allusions and much of what may be called the poetic language and machinery, is strikingly similar to the main principles of the Magian faith. Nor can it be necessary to suggest how completely such expressions as the "children of light," and the "children of darkness," had become identified with the common language of the Jews, at the time of our Saviour: and when Jesus proclaimed himself "the Light of the world," no doubt he employed a term familiar to the ears of the people, though, as usual, they might not clearly comprehend in what sense it was applicable to the Messiah, or to the purely moral character of the new religion.

It is generally admitted, that the Jewish notions about the angels (1), one great subject of dispute in their synagogues, and what may be called their Dæmonology, received a strong foreign tinge during their residence in Babylonia. The earliest books of the Old Testament fully recognize the ministration of angels; but in Babylonia (2) this simpler creed grew up into a regular hierarchy, in which the degrees of rank and subordination were arranged with almost heraldic precision. The seven great archangels of Jewish tradition correspond with the Amschaspands of the Zendavesta (3): and in strict mutual analogy, both systems arrayed against each other a separate host of spiritual beings, with distinct powers and functions. Each nation, each individual had in one case his Ferver, in the other his guardian angel (4); and was exposed to the malice of the hostile Dev or Dæmon. In apparent allusion to or coincidence with this system, the visions of Daniel represent Michael, the tutelar angel or intelligence of the Jewish people, in opposition to the four angels of the great monarchies; and even our Saviour seems to condescend to the popular language, when he represents the parental care of the Almighty over children under the significant and beautiful

The an-
gels.

(1) La doctrine de l'existence des anges, fondée sur la révélation, a été beaucoup modifiée par les opinions des peuples qui habitaient sur les rives du fleuve Cohar, dans la Babylonic, et dans les autres pays de l'Orient, où les deux royaumes d'Israël et de Juda furent dispersés. Sous ce point de vue on peut regarder les *Mehestani*, ou les sectateurs de Zoroastre, comme ceux qui ont appris beaucoup de choses aux dépositaires de la tradition, et dont les maximes se retrouvent aujourd'hui dans les deux Talmuds. Chiarini, le Talmud de Babylone, tom. i. p. 101.

(2) Even the traditionalists among the Jews allowed that the names of the angels came from Babylon; they are nevertheless pure Hebrew or Chaldean. Mich-a-el (who is as God), Gabri-el, the Man of God. Gesen. Lex. in verb. Bellerman, über die Esaer, p. 30. The transition from the primitive to the Babylonian belief may be traced in the apocryphal book of Tobit, no doubt of Eastern origin. On the Notions of Dæmons, see Marten, Eccl. Hist. i. 161.

(3) Jonathan, the Chaldean paraphrast, on Gen. ii. 7. "The Lord said to the seven angels that stand before him." Drusius, on Luke i. 19. Seven, however, seems to have been the number of perfection among the Jews from the earliest period. Old Testament, passim.

Six seems the sacred number with the Persians. The Amschaspands are usually reckoned six; but Oromasd is sometimes included to make up seven. See the Yesht of the Seven Amschaspands, in the Zendavesta of Du Perron or Kleuker. Compare also Foucher's Disquisition, translated in Kleuker, Anhang. i. p. 294.

(4) In the LXX. the doctrine of guardian angels is interpolated into the translation of Deut. xxxii. 8. Plato adopted the notion either immediately, or immediately, from the East. Polit. et in Critia (in init.). Compare Max. Tyrius, xv. 17. Hostanes the Magian held the same opinions. Cypr. de Van. Idol. Min. Fel.

image, "that in Heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in Heaven (1)."

Principle
of Evil.

The great impersonated Principle of Evil appears to have assumed much of the character of the antagonist power of darkness. The name itself of Satan (2), which in the older poetical book of Job is assigned to a spirit of different attributes, one of the celestial ministers who assemble before the throne of the Almighty, and is used in the earlier books of the Old Testament in its simple sense of an adversary, became appropriated to the prince of the malignant spirits—the head and representative of the spiritual world, which ruled over physical as well as moral evil.

The Supreme Deity removed from all connection with the material world.

Even the notion of the one Supreme Deity had undergone some modification consonant to certain prevailing opinions of the time. Wherever any approximation had been made to the sublime truth of the one great First Cause, either awful religious reverence or philosophic abstraction had removed the primal Deity entirely beyond the sphere of human sense, and supposed that the intercourse of the Divinity with man, the moral government, and even the original creation, had been carried on by the intermediate agency, either in Oriental language of an Emanation, or in Platonic, of the Wisdom, Reason, or Intelligence of the one Supreme. This Being was more or less distinctly impersonated, according to the more popular or more philosophic, the more material or more abstract notions of the age or people (3). This was the doctrine from the Ganges, or even the shores of the Yellow Sea (4), to the Ilissus; it was the fundamental principle of the Indian religion and Indian philosophy (5); it was the basis of Zoroastrianism (6), it was pure Platonism (7), it was the Platonic Judaism of the Alexandrian school. Many fine passages might be quoted from Philo, on the impossibility that the first self-existing Being should become cognizable to the sense of man; and even in Palestine, no doubt, John the Baptist, and our Lord himself, spoke no new doctrine, but rather the common sentiment of the more enlightened, when they declared that "no man had seen God at any time (8)." In conformity with

Mediator.

(1) Matt. xviii. 10.

(2) Schlusner. Lex. voc. Satan. Dr. Russell, in a Dissertation prefixed to his Connection of Sacred and Profane History, has traced the gradual development of this tenet. It is rather singular that in the work of Theodorus of Mopuestia on Magianism (quoted Photii Bibliotheca, num. 81.), Zeruan is said to have produced τὸν Ὀρμίσδην * καὶ τὸν Σατάναν. On the other side of this question may be consulted Rosenmüller on Job, ch. i., and Michaelis, Epimetron in Lowth, de sacra Poesi.

(3) It is curious to trace the development of this idea in the older and in the apocryphal books of the Old Testament. In the book of Proverbs, the Wisdom is little more than the great attribute of the Deity, an intellectual personification: in Ecclesiasticus it is a distinct and separate being, and "stands up beautiful," before the throne of God, xxx. 1.

(4) M. Abel Remusat says, of the three Chinese religions, "Parmi leurs dogmes fondamentaux, enseignés six siècles avant notre ère par Lao-tseu, l'un de leurs maîtres, est celui de l'existence de la raison primordiale, qui a créé le monde, le Logos des Platoniciens, Rech. Asiat. 2 ser. i. 38.

(5) In the Indian system Brahm, in the neuter, is the great Primal Spirit. See Baron W. Von Humboldt, über den Bhagavat Gita. Compare Bopp. Conjugations System, 290. 301.

(6) See above.

(7) Πᾶν τὸ δαιμονιὸν μεταξὺ ἐστὶ τοῦ καὶ θνητοῦ—Θεὸς δὲ ἀνθρώπων οὐ μίγνυται, ἀλλὰ διὰ τοῦτου πᾶσα ἐστὶν ἡ ὁμίλια. Plato, in Symp.

(8) John, i. 18. Compare John, i. 4. 18. vi. 46.

this principle, the Jews, in the interpretation of the older Scriptures, instead of direct and sensible communication from the one great Deity, had interposed either one or more intermediate beings, as the channels of communication. According to one accredited tradition alluded to by St. Stephen, the law was delivered "by the disposition of angels (1);"—according to another, this office was delegated to a single angel, sometimes called the angel of the Law (2), at others the Metatron. But the more ordinary representative, as it were, of God to the sense and mind of man, was the Memra, or the Divine Word; and it is remarkable, that the same appellation is found in the Indian (3), the Persian (4), the Platonic, and the Alexandrian systems. By the Targumists, the earliest Jewish commentators on the Scriptures, this term had been already applied to the Messiah (5); nor is it necessary to observe the manner in which it has been sanctified by its introduction into the Christian scheme (6). From this remarkable uniformity of conception, and coincidence of language, has sometimes been assumed a common tradition, generally disseminated throughout the race of man. I should be content with receiving it as the general acquiescence of the human mind, in the necessity of some mediation between the pure spiritual nature of the Deity, and the intellectual and moral being of man, of which the sublimest and simplest, and therefore the most natural development, was the revelation of God in Christ—in the

(1) Compare LXX. Transl. of Deut. xxxiii. 2., where the angels are interpolated. *Ἡμῶν τὰ κάλλιστα τῶν δογμάτων καὶ τὰ ὁσιώτατα τῶν ἐν τοῖς νόμοις δι' ἀγγέλων παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ μαθήσαντες*. Joseph Ant. xv. 5. 3. Compare Chiarini, i. 307. And on the traces of the Judæo-Alexandrian philosophy in the LXX. Dahn, *Judisch-Alexandrinische Religions Philosophie*, part ii. pp. 49—56.

(2) Compare Gal. iii. 19. *Deus Mosen legem dedit: cum autem descenderet, tanto timore percussus est, ut omnium oblivisceretur. Deus autem statim Jesifiam, Angelum legis, vocavit, qui ipsi legem tradidit bene ordinatam et custoditam, omnesque angeli amici ejus facti sunt*. Jalkut Ruben, quoted by Wetstein and Schoetgen, in loco. See also Eisenmenger, i. 56. Two angels seem to be introduced in this latter tradition, the angelus Metatron, and Jesifya, angelus Legis.

Philo, de Prægn, rationalises further, and considers the commandments communicated, as it were, by the air made articulate, ii. 405.

(3) It appears in the Indian system: Vach signifying speech. She is the active power of Brahma, proceeding from him: she speaks a hymn in the Vedas, in praise of herself as the supreme and universal soul. (Colebrooke, in *Asiatic Researches*, viii. p. 402.) La première parole que proféra le Créateur, ce fut Oum: Oum parut avant toutes choses, et il s'appelle le premier né du Créateur. Oum ou Prana, pareil au pur éther renfermant en soi toutes les qualités, tous les élémens, est le nom, le corps de Brahm,

et par conséquent infini comme lui, créateur et maître de toutes choses. Brahm méditant sur le Verbe divin y trouva l'eau primitive. Oupuek-Hat, quoted in De Guignaut, p. 644.

Origen, or rather the author of the *Philosophumena* inserted in his works, was aware of this fact. *Αὐτοὶ* (Brachmanes) τὸν Θεὸν ὥς εἶναι λέγουσιν οὐχ ὁποῖόν τις ἰρᾷ, οὐδ' ὅσον ἥλιος καὶ πῦρ ἀλλὰ ἴστιν αὐτοῖς ὁ θεὸς λόγος, οὐχ ὁ ἐναρβρος, ἀλλὰ ὁ τῆς γνώσεως, δι' οὗ τὰ κρύπτα τῆς γνώσεως μυστήρια ὁράται σφύρις. de Brachman.

According to a note, partly by M. le Normant, partly by M. Champollion, in *Chateaubriand* (*Etudes sur l'Histoire*). Thoos is, in the hieroglyphical language of Egypt, the Word.

(4) In the Persian system the use of the term *Honover* is by no means consistent; strictly speaking it occupies only a third place. Ormuzd, the good Principle, created the external universe by his Word (*Honover*): in another sense the great primal spirit is the Word; in another, the Principle of Good.

(5) It is by the latter, as may be seen in the works of Lightfoot, Schoetgen, and other Talmædic writers, and in Bertholdt (*Christologia Judaica*), that it is applied to the Messiah, not by Philo, who, as will appear, scarcely, if ever, notices a personal Messiah.

(6) Dr. Burton (in his *Bampton Lectures*) acknowledges, of course, the antiquity of the term, and suggests the most sensible mode of reconciling this fact with its adoption into Christianity.

inadequate language of our version of the original "the brightness of (God's) glory, and the express image of his person (1)."

Future
State.

No question has been more strenuously debated than the knowledge of a future state, entertained by the earlier Jews. At all events it is quite clear, that before the time of Christ, not merely the immortality of the soul, but what is very different, a final resurrection (2), had become completely interwoven with the popular belief. Passages in the later prophets, Daniel and Ezekiel, particularly a very remarkable one in the latter, may be adduced as the first distinct authorities on which this belief might be grounded. It appears, however, in its more perfect development, soon after the return from the captivity. As early as the revolt of the Maccabees, it was so deeply rooted in the public mind, that we find a solemn ceremony performed for the dead (3). From henceforth it became the leading article of the great schism between the traditionists and the anti-traditionists, the Pharisees and the Sadducees : and in the gospels we cannot but discover at a glance, its almost universal prevalence. Even the Roman historian was struck by its influence on the indomitable character of the people (4). In the Zoroastrian religion a resurrection holds a place no less prominent, than in the later Jewish belief (5). On the day of the final triumph of the Great Principle of Light, the children of light are to be raised from the dead, to partake in the physical splendour, and to assume the moral perfection of the subjects of the triumphant Principle of Good. In the same manner, the Jews associated together the coming of the Messiah with the final resurrection. From many passages, quoted by Lightfoot, I select the following : "The righteous, whom the Lord shall raise from the dead in the days of the Messiah, when they are restored to life, shall not again return to their dust, neither in the days of the Messiah, nor in the following age, but their flesh shall remain upon them (6)."

Jewish
notion of
the
Messiah.

Out of all these different sources, from whence they derived a knowledge of a future state, the passages of their prophets in their own sacred writings (among which that in the book of Daniel, from its coincidence with the Zoroastrian tenet, might easily be misapplied), and the oriental element, the popular belief of the Palestinian Jews had moulded up a splendid though confused vision of the appearance of the Messiah, the simultaneous regeneration of all things, the resurrection of the dead, and the reign of the Messiah upon

(1) Ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης καὶ χαρακτὴρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως αὐτοῦ. Hebrews i. 3.

(2) It is singular how often this material point of difference has been lost sight of in the discussions on this subject.

(3) 2 Macc. xii. 44.

(4) Animasque prælio et suppliciiis peremptorum æternas putant Tac. Hist. v. 5.

(5) Hyde, de Vet. Pers. Relig. 537. and 293. Beausobre, Hist. du Manichéisme, i. 204. Ἀναζώσεσθαι κατὰ τοὺς Μάγους τοὺς ἀνθρώπους καὶ ἵστασθαι ἀθανάτους. Thompson, apud Diog. Laert. Kleuker's Zendavesta and Anhang, part ii. p. 110. Boudéhesch, xix. xxxi., etc. Compare Gesenius on Isaiah xxvi. 19.

(6) Lightfoot, v. 255 x. 495. xi. 353.

earth. All these events were to take place at once, or to follow close upon each other. In many passages, the language of the apostles clearly intimates that they were as litile prepared to expect a purely religious renovation, at the coming of the Messiah, as the rest of their countrymen; and throughout the apostolic age, this notion still maintained its ground, and kept up the general apprehension, that the final consummation was immediately at hand (1). It is no doubt impossible to assign their particular preponderance to these several elements, which combined to form the popular belief: yet, even if many of their notions entirely originated in the Zoroastrian system, it would be curious to observe how, by the very calamities of the Jews, Divine Providence adapted them for the more important part which they were to fill in the history of mankind; and to trace the progressive manner in which the Almighty prepared the development of the more perfect and universal system of Christianity.

For, with whatever oriental colouring Jewish tradition might invest the image of the great Deliverer, in Palestine it still remained rigidly national and exclusive. If the Jew concurred with the worshipper of Ormusd in expecting a final restoration of all things through the agency of a Divine Intelligence (2) that Being, according to the promise to their fathers, was to be intimately connected with their race; he was to descend from the line of David; he was to occupy Sion, the holy city, as the centre of his government; he was to make his appearance in the temple on Mount Moriah; he was to re-assemble all the scattered descendants of the tribes, to discomfit and expel their barbarous and foreign rulers. The great distinction between the two races of mankind, fell in completely with their hereditary prejudices: the children of Abraham were, as their birthright, the children of light; and even the doctrine of the resurrection was singularly harmonised with that exclusive nationality. At least the first resurrection (3) was to be their separate portion (4); it was to summon them, if not all, at least the

Messiah.
national.

(1) Compare 2 Esdras vi. 24, 25.

(2) The Persians long preserved the notion of a restoration of the law of Zoroaster by a kind of Messiah. "Suivant les traditions des Perses, rapportées dans la Zerdouscht-naméh et dans le Djamaspi-naméh, Pashoutan, l'un des personnages destinés à faire revivre la religion de Zoroastre, et l'empire des Perses dans les derniers temps, demeure en attendant ce moment dans le Kanguézel, pays qui paraît répondre en partie au Khorassan. Il en sortira à l'ordre qui lui sera apporté par un ized (*i. e.* spiritus celestis) nommé Scrosch, et reviendra dans l'Iran. Par l'efficacité des paroles sacrées de l'Avesta, il mettra en fuite les barbares qui désolaient ce pays, y rétablira la religion dans toute sa pureté, et y fera renaître l'abondance, le bonheur et la paix. Silvestre de Sacy, sur div. Ant. de la Perse. p. 95.

(3) 2 Esd. xi. 10—31. All Israelites (says the

Mishna. Tract. Sanh. c. xi. 12.) shall partake in the life to come—except those who deny the resurrection of the dead (the Sadducees?) and that the law came from heaven, and the Epicureans. R. Akiba added, he who reads foreign books—Aba Schaul, he who pronounces the ineffable name (Jehovah). Three kings and four private individuals have no share in the life to come:—the kings, Jeroboam, Ahab, Manasseh; the four private men, Balaam, Doeg, Achitophel, —?

(4) It is good (says the martyred youth in the book of Maccabees) being put to death by men, to be raised up again by him; as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection to life. 2 Macc. ix. 14.; xii. 44.; also 2 Esd. ii. 23. Compare the speech of Josephus, Hist. of the Jews, vol. ii. p. 312. Quotations might be multiplied from the rabbinical writers.

more righteous, from Paradise, from the abode of departed spirits ; and under their triumphant king, they were to enjoy a thousand years of glory and bliss upon the recreated and renovated earth (1).

Judaic-
Grecian
system.

We pass from the rich poetic impersonations, the fantastic but expressive symbolic forms of the East, to the colder and clearer light of Grecian philosophy, with which the Western Jews, especially in Alexandria, had endeavoured to associate their own religious truths. The poetic age of Greece had long passed away before the two nations came into contact ; and the same rationalising tendency of the times led the Greek to reduce his religion, the Jew the history of his nation, to a lofty moral allegory (2). Enough of poetry remained in the philosophic system, adopted in the great Jewish Alexandrian school, that of Plato, to leave ample scope for the imagination : and indeed there was a kind of softened Orientalism, probably derived by Plato from his master Pythagoras from the East, which readily assimilated with the mystic interpretations of the Egypto-Jewish theology. The Alexandrian notions of the days of the Messiah are faintly shadowed out in the book " of the Wisdom of Solomon (3), " in terms which occasionally remind us of some which occur in the New Testament. The righteous Jews, on account of their acknowledged moral and religious superiority, were to " judge the nations," and have " dominion over all people." But the more perfect development of these views is to be found in the works of Philo. This writer, who however inclined to soar into the cloudy realms of mysticism, often rests in the middle region of the moral sublime, and abounds in passages which would scarcely do discredit to his Athenian master, had arrayed a splendid vision of the perfectibility of human nature, in which his own nation was to take the most distinguished part. From them knowledge and virtue were to emanate through the universal race of man. The whole world, convinced at length of the moral superiority of the Mosaic institutes, interpreted, it is true, upon the allegorical system, and so harmonised with the sublimest Platonism of the Greeks, was to submit in voluntary homage, and render their allegiance to the great religious teachers and examples of mankind. The Jews themselves, thus suddenly regenerated to more than the primitive purity and loftiness of their Law, (in which the Divine Reason,

(1) Tanchuma, fol. 255. Quot sunt dies Messia? R. Elieser, filius R. Jose, Galilæus, dixit Messiam tempora sunt mille anni, secundum dictum Jer. xxiii, 4. Dies enim Dei mille est annorum. Bertholdt, p. 38.

The holy blessed God will renew the world for a thousand years—quoted by Lightfoot, iii. 37. If I presume to treat the millenium as a fable " of Jewish dotage," I may remind my readers that this expression is taken from what once stood as an article (the forty-first) of our church. See Collier for the Articles in Edward the Sixth's reign. Atque de hujus in his terris regno, mille

annos duraturo, ejusdemque deliciis et voluptatibus, de bellis ejus cum terribili quodam adversario quem Antichristum dicebant, de victoriis denique earumque fructibus mirabilia narrabant somnia, quorum deinde pars ad Christianos transferebatur. Mosheim, ii. 8.

This was the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God—of Christ, or emphatically " the kingdom." See Kuinoel, vol. i. p. 61. Schoetgen, Hor. Heb. p. 1147.

(2) Compare Bertholdt, ch. vi.

(3) Wisdom, iii. 8.; v. 16.; viii. 14.

the Logos, was as it were embodied,) were to gather together from all quarters, and under the guidance of a more than human being, unseen to all eyes but those of the favoured nation (1) (such was the only vestige of the Messiah) to re-assemble in their native land. There the great era of virtue, and peace, and abundance, productiveness of the soil, prolificness in the people, in short, of all the blessings promised in the book of Deuteronomy, was to commence and endure for ever. This people were to be invincible, since true valour is inseparable from true virtue. By a singular inference, not out of character with allegoric interpreters who, while they refine the plainest facts and precepts to a more subtle and mystic meaning, are apt to take that which is evidently figurative in a literal sense, the very wild beasts in awe and wonder at this pure and passionless race, who shall have ceased to rage against each other with bestial ferocity, were to tame their savage hostility to mankind (2). Thus the prophecy of Isaiah, to which Philo seems to allude, though he does not adduce the words, was to be accomplished to the letter; and that paradisaical state of amity between brute and man, so beautifully described by Milton, perhaps from this source, was finally to be renewed. And as the Jewish philosopher, contrary to most of his own countrymen, and to some of the Grecian sects, denied the future dissolution of the world by fire, and asserted its eternity (3), he probably contemplated the everlasting duration of this peaceful and holy state.

Reign of
Messiah,
according
to Alexan-
drian
Jews.

Such, for no doubt the Alexandrian opinions had penetrated into Palestine, particularly among the Hellenist Jews—such were the vast, incoherent, and dazzling images with which the future seemed to the hopes of the Jewish people (4). They admitted either a part or the whole of the common belief, as accorded with their tone of mind and feeling. Each region, each rank, each sect; the Babylonian, the Egyptian, the Palestinian, the Samaritan; the Pharisee, the lawyer, the zealot, arrayed the Messiah in those attributes which suited his own temperament. Of that which was more methodically taught in the synagogue or the adjacent school, the populace caught up whatever made the deeper impression. The enthusiasm took an active or contemplative, an ambitious or a religious, an earthly or a heavenly tone, according to the education, habits, or station of the believer; and to different men

Belief dif-
ferent ac-
cording to
character
of the
believer.

De Execr. ii. 435, 436.

De Præm. ii. p. 422.

De Mundi incorruptibilitate, passim.

(4) The following passages from the apocryphal books may be consulted; I do not think it necessary to refer to all the citations which might be made from the Prophets.—The “faithful prophet” is mentioned, 1 Macc. xiv. 41; the discomfiture of the enemies of Israel, Judith, xvi. 17; universal peace, Ecclesiast. i. 23, 24; the re-assembling of the tribes, Tobit, xiii. 13—18. Baruch, ii. 34, 35: the conversion of many

nations, Tobit, xiii. 11. xiv. 6, 7: see particularly the second apocryphal book of Esdras, which, although manifestly Jewish-Christian, is of value as illustrating the opinions of the times.—“Thou madest the world for our sakes; as for the other people, which also come of Adam, thou hast said that they are nothing, but be like unto spittle; and hast likened the abundance of them unto a drop that falleth from a vessel.” * If the world now be made for our sakes, why do we not possess an inheritance with the world? how long shall this endure?” 2 Esdras, vi. 56—59.

the Messiah was man or angel, or more than angel; he was king (1), conqueror, or moral reformer; a more victorious Joshua, a more magnificent Herod, a wider-ruling Cæsar, a wiser Moses (2), a holier Abraham (3); an angel, the Angel of the Covenant, the Metatron, the Mediator between God and man (4); Michael, the great tutelary archangel of the nation, who appears by some to have been identified with the mysterious Being who led them forth from Egypt; he was the Word of God (5); an Emanation from the Deity; himself partaking of the divine nature. While this was the religious belief, some there were, no doubt, of the Sadducaic party, or the half-Grecised adherents of the Herodian family, who treated the whole as a popular delusion; or, as Josephus to Vespasian, would not scruple to employ it as a politic means for the advancement of their own fortunes. While the robber chieftain looked out from his hill-tower to see the blood-red banner of him whom he literally expected to come "from Edom with dyed garments from Bozrah," and "treading the wine-press in his wrath," the Essene in his solitary hermitage, or monastic fraternity of husbandmen, looked to the reign of the Messiah, when the more peaceful images of the same prophet would be accomplished, and the Prince of Peace establish his quiet and uninterrupted reign.

Popular
belief.

In the body of the people, the circumstances of the times powerfully tended both to develop more fully, and to stamp more deeply into their hearts, the expectation of a temporal deliverer, a conqueror, a king. As misgovernment irritated, as exaction pressed, as national pride was wounded by foreign domination, so enthusiasm took a fiercer and more martial turn: as the desire of national independence became the predominant sentiment, the Messiah was more immediately expected to accomplish that which lay nearest to their hearts. The higher views of his character, and the more unworldly hopes of a spiritual and moral revolution, receded farther and farther from the view; and as the time approached in which the Messiah was to be born, the people in general were in a less favourable state of mind to listen to the doctrines of peace, humility, and love, or to recognise that Messiah in a being so entirely divested of temporal power or splendour. In the ruling party,

(1) The Gospels, *passim*; 2 Esdras, xii. 32.

(2) Thou wilt proclaim liberty to thy people, the house of Israel, by the hand of Messias, as thou didst by the hand of Moses and Aaron, on the day of the Passover. Chald. Par. du Lament. ii. 22. quoted by Lightfoot, v. 161.

Among others to the same purport, the following, of a later date, is curious. Moses came out of the wilderness, and King Messias out of the midst of Rome; the one spake in the head of a cloud, and the other spake in the head of a cloud, and the Word of the Lord speaking between these, and they walking together. Targ. Jer. on Exod. xii.

(3) "Behold, glorious shall be my servant

King Messias, exalted, lofty, and very high: more exalted than Abraham, for it is written of him, I have lifted up my hand to the Lord (Gen. xiv. 22.); and more exalted than Moses, for it is written of him, He saith of me, take him unto thy bosom, for he is greater than the fathers." Jalkut Shamuni; see Bertholdt, 101.

Some of the titles of the Messiah, recognised by general belief and usage, will be noticed as they occur in the course of the history.

(4) Sohar, quoted by Bertholdt, p. 121. 133.

(5) Many of the quotations about the Memra, or divine Word, may be found in Dr. Pye-Smith's work on the Messiah.

on the other hand, as will hereafter appear, the dread of this inflammable state of the public mind, and the dangerous position of affairs, would confirm that jealousy of innovation inseparable from established governments. Every tendency to commotion would be repressed with a strong hand, or at least the rulers would be constantly on the watch, by their forward zeal in condemning all disturbers of the public peace, to exculpate themselves with their foreign masters from any participation in the tumult. Holding, no doubt, with devout, perhaps with conscientious earnestness, the promised coming of the Messiah, as an abstract truth, and as an article of their religious creed, their own interests, their rank and authority, were so connected with the existing order of things, political prudence would appear so fully to justify more than ordinary caution, that while they would have fiercely resented any imputation on their want of faith in the divine promises, it would have been difficult, even by the most public and imposing "signs," to have satisfied their cool incredulity.

With all these elements of political and religious excitement stirring through the whole fabric of society, it would be difficult to conceive a nation, in a more extraordinary state of suspense and agitation, than the Jews about the period of the birth of Christ. Their temporal and religious fortunes seemed drawing to an immediate issue. Their king lay slowly perishing of a lingering and loathsome disease; and his temper, which had so often broken out into paroxysms, little short of insanity, now seemed to be goaded by bodily and mental anguish to the fury of a wild beast. Every day might be anticipated the spectacle of the execution of his eldest son, now on his way from Rome, and known to have been detected in his unnatural treasons. It seemed that even yet the royal authority and the stern fanaticism of the religious party, which had, for many years, lowered upon each other with hostile front, might grapple in a deadly struggle. The more prudent of the religious leaders could scarcely restrain the indignant enthusiasm of their followers, which broke out at once on the accession of Archelaus; while, on the other hand, the almost incredible testamentary cruelty, by which Herod commanded the heads of the principal Jewish families to be assembled in the Hippodrome, at the signal of his death, to be cut down in a promiscuous massacre, may reasonably be ascribed to remorseless policy, as well as to frantic vengeance. He might suppose that, by removing all opponents of weight and influence, he could secure the peaceable succession of his descendants, if the emperor, according to his promise, should ratify the will, by which he had divided his dominions among his surviving sons (1).

State of
political
confusion.

(1) Compare Hist. of the Jews, vol. ii. p. 125.

Birth of
Christ.

In the midst of this civil confusion, that great event took place, which was to produce so total a revolution in the state of all mankind. However striking the few incidents which are related of the birth of Christ, when contemplated distinct and separate from the stirring transactions of the times, and through the atmosphere, as it were, of devotional feelings, which at once seem to magnify and harmonise them ; yet, for this very reason, we are perhaps scarcely capable of judging the effect which such events actually produced, and the relative magnitude in which they appeared to the contemporary generation. For if we endeavour to cast ourselves back into the period to which these incidents belong, and place ourselves, as it were in the midst of the awful political crisis, which seemed about to decide at once the independence or servitude of the nation, and might, more or less, affect the private and personal welfare of each family and individual, it will by no means move our wonder, that the commotion excited by the appearance of the Magians in Jerusalem, and the announcement of the birth of the Christ, should not have made a more deep impression on the public mind, and should have passed away, it should seem, so speedily from the popular remembrance. In fact, even if generally credited, the intelligence that the Messiah had appeared in the form of a new-born infant, would rather perhaps have disappointed, than gratified, the high-wrought expectation, which looked for an instant, an immediate deliverance, and would be too impatient to await the slow development of his manhood. Whether the more considerate expected the Deliverer suddenly to reveal himself in his maturity of strength and power, may be uncertain : but the last thing that the more ardent and fiery looked for, particularly those who supposed that the Messiah would partake of the divine or superhuman nature, was his appearance as a child ; the last throne to which they would be summoned to render their homage, would be the cradle of a helpless infant (1).

Belief in
preterna-
tural in-
terposi-
tions.

Nor is it less important, throughout the early history of Christianity, to seize the spirit of the times. Events which appear to us so extraordinary, that we can scarcely conceive that they should either fail in exciting a powerful sensation, or ever be obliterated from the popular remembrance, in their own day might pass off as of little more than ordinary occurrence. During the whole life of Christ, and the early propagation of the religion, it must be borne in mind that they took place in an age, and among a people, which superstition had made so familiar with what were supposed to be preternatural events, that wonders awakened no emotion, or were speedily superseded by some new demand on the ever-ready belief. The Jews of that period not only believed that the Supreme Being

(1) " When Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is " John, vii. 27

had the power of controlling the course of nature, but that the same influence was possessed by multitudes of subordinate spirits, both good and evil. Where the pious Christian in the present day would behold the direct agency of the Almighty, the Jews would invariably have interposed an angel, as the author or ministerial agent in the wonderful transaction. Where the Christian moralist would condemn the fierce passion, the ungovernable lust, or the inhuman temper, the Jew discerned the workings of diabolical possession. Scarcely a malady was endured, or crime committed, but it was traced to the operation of one of these myriad dæmons, who watched every opportunity of exercising their malice in the sufferings and the sins of men.

Yet the first incident in Christian history, the annunciation of the conception and birth of John the Baptist (1), as its wonderful circumstances took place in a priestly family, and on so public a scene as the temple, might be expected to excite the public attention in no ordinary degree. The four Levitical families who returned from the captivity had been distributed into twenty-four courses, one of which came into actual office in the temple every week : they had assumed the old names, as if descended in direct lineage from the original heads of families ; and thus the regular ministrations of the priesthood were re-organised on the ancient footing, coeval with the foundation of the temple. In the course of Abia, the eighth in order (2), was an aged priest, named Zachariah. The officiating course were accustomed to cast lots for the separate functions. Some of these were considered of higher dignity than others, which were either of a more menial character, or at least were not held in equal estimation. Almost the most important was the watching and supplying with incense the great brazen altar, which stood within the building of the temple, in the first or holy place. Into this, at the sound of a small bell, which gave notice to the worshippers at a distance, the ministering priest entered alone : and in the sacred chamber, into which the light of day never penetrated, but where the dim fires of the altar, and the chandeliers, which were never extinguished, gave a solemn and uncertain light still more bedimmed by the clouds of smoke arising from the newly fed altar of incense, no doubt, in the pious mind, the sense of the more immediate presence of the Deity, only separated by the veil, which divided the Holy place from the Holy of Holies, would constantly have awakened the most profound emotions. While the priest was employed within the gates, the multitude of worshippers in the adjacent court awaited his return ; for it should seem, that the offering of incense was considered emblematic of the prayers

Concep-
tion and
birth of
John the
Baptist,
(a. c. 5).

(1) Luke, i. 5—22.

(2) As each came into office twice in the year, and there is nothing to indicate whether this was the first or second period, it appears to me

quite impossible to calculate the time of the year in which this event took place. Of this ordering of the courses, observes Lightfoot, both Talmuds speak largely. iii. 21.

of the whole nation; and though it took place twice every day, at morning and evening, the entrance and return of the priest from the mysterious precincts, was watched by the devout with something of awful anxiety.

This day, to the general astonishment, Zachariah, to whom the function had fallen, lingered far beyond the customary time. For it is said of the high-priest's annual entrance into the Holy of Holies, that he usually staid within as short a time as possible, lest the anxious people should fear, that on account of some omission in the offering, or guilt in the minister, or perhaps in the nation, of which he was the federal religious head, he might have been stricken with death. It may be supposed, therefore, that even in the subordinate ceremonies there was a certain ordinary time, after which the devout people would begin to tremble, lest their representative, who in their behalf was making the national offering, might have met with some sinister or fatal sign of the divine disfavour. When at length Zachariah appeared he could not speak; and it was evident that in some mysterious manner he had been struck dumb, and to the anxious inquiries he could only make known by signs that something awful and unusual had taken place within the sanctuary. At what period he made his full relation of the wonderful fact which had occurred does not appear; but it was a relation of absorbing interest both to the aged man himself, who, although his wife was far advanced in years, was to be blessed with offspring; and to the whole people, as indicating the fulfilment of one of the preliminary signs which were universally accredited as precursive of the Messiah.

Vision of
Zachariah.

In the vision of Zachariah, he had beheld an angel standing on the right side of the altar, who announced that his prayer was heard (1), and that his barren house was to be blessed; that his aged wife should bear a son, and that son be consecrated from his birth to the service of God, and observe the strictest austerity; that he was to revive the decaying spirit of religion, and the disorganised nation, and above all, should appear as the expected harbinger, who was to precede and prepare the way for the approaching Redeemer. The angel proclaimed himself to be the messenger of God (Gabriel), and both as a punishment for his incredulity, and a sign of the certainty of the promise, Zachariah was struck dumb, but with an assurance that the affliction should remain only till the accomplishment of the divine prediction in the birth of his son (2). If, as has been said, the vision of Zachariah was in any manner communicated to the assembled people (though the silence of the

(1) Grotius and many other writers are of opinion that by this is meant, not the prayer of Zachariah for offspring, but the general national prayer, offered by him in his ministerial function, for the appearance of the Messiah.

(2) According to Josephus, Ant. xiii. 18. Hyrcanus, the high-priest heard a voice from heaven, while he was offering on the altar of incense.

evangelist makes strongly against any such supposition), or even to his kindred the officiating priesthood, it would no doubt have caused a great sensation, falling in, as it would, with the prevailing tone of the public mind. For it was the general belief that some messenger would, in the language of Isaiah, "prepare the way of the Lord;" and the last words which had, as it were, sealed the book of prophecy, intimated, as many supposed, the *personal* re-appearance of Elijah, the greatest, and, in popular opinion, a sort of representative of the whole prophetic community. The ascetic life to which the infant prophet was to be dedicated, according to the Nazaritish vow of abstinence from all wine or strong drink, was likewise a characteristic of the prophetic order, which, although many, more particularly among the Essenes, asserted their inspired knowledge of futurity, was generally considered to have ceased in the person of Malachi, the last whose oracles were enrolled in the sacred canon (1).

It does not appear that dumbness was a legal disqualification for the sacerdotal function, for Zachariah remained among his brethren, the priests, till their week of ministration ended. He then returned to his usual residence in the southern part of Judæa most probably in the ancient and well-known city of Hebron (2), which was originally a Levitical city; and although the sacerdotal order do not seem to have resumed the exclusive possession of their cities at the return from the captivity, it might lead the priestly families to settle more generally in those towns; and Hebron, though of no great size, was considered remarkably populous in proportion to its extent. The divine promise began to be accomplished; and during the five first months of her pregnancy, Elizabeth, the wife of Zachariah, concealed herself, either avoiding the curious inquiries of her neighbours in these jealous and perilous times, or on devotional retirement, rendering thanks to the Almighty for the unexpected blessing (3).

Return of
Zachariah
to Hebron.

It was on a far less public scene, that the birth of Christ, of whom the child of Zachariah was to be the harbinger, was announced to the Virgin Mother. The families which traced their descent from the house of David had fallen into poverty and neglect. When, after the return from the Babylonian captivity, the sovereignty had been assumed, first by the high-priests of Levitical descent, subsequently by the Asmonean family, who were likewise of the priestly

Annuncia-
tion.

(1) The mythic interpreters (see Strauss, p. 138.) assert that this "short poem," as they call it, was invented out of the passages in the Old Testament, relating to the births of Isaac, Samson, and Samuel, by a Judaizing Christian, while there were still genuine followers of John the Baptist, in order to conciliate them to Christianity. This is admitting very high antiquity of the passage; and unless it coincided with their own

traditions, was it likely to have any influence upon that sect?

(2) Yet, as there seems no reason why the city of Hebron should not be named, many of the most learned writers, Valesius, Reland, Harremberg, Kuinoel, have supposed that *Jutta* (the name of a small city) is the right reading, which being little known, was altered into a city *of* Judah.

(3) Luke, i. 23—25.

line, and finally, by the house of Herod, of Idumean origin, but engrafted into the Maccabean line by the marriage of Herod with Mariamne, it was the most obvious policy to leave in the obscurity into which they had sunk, that race which, if it should produce any pretendant of the least distinction, he might advance an hereditary claim, as dear to the people as it would be dangerous to the reigning dynasty. The whole descendants of the royal race seem to have sunk so low, that even the popular belief, which looked to the line of David, as that from which the Messiah was to spring (1), did not invest them with sufficient importance to awaken the jealousy or suspicion of the rulers. Joseph, a man descended from this royal race, had migrated, for some unknown reason, to a distance from the part of the land inhabited by the tribe of Benjamin, to which, however, they were still considered to belong. He settled in Nazareth, an obscure town in Lower Galilee, which, independent of the general disrepute in which the whole of the Galilean provinces were held by the inhabitants of the more holy district of Judæa, seems to have been marked by a kind of peculiar proverbial contempt. Joseph had been betrothed to a virgin of his own race, named Mary, but according to Jewish usage, some time was to elapse between the betrothment and the espousals. In this interval took place the annunciation of the divine conception to the Virgin (2). In no part is the singular simplicity of the Gospel narrative more striking than in the relation of this incident; and I should be inclined, for this reason alone, to reject the notion that these chapters were of a later date (3). So early does that remarkable characteristic of the evangelic writings develope itself; the manner in which they relate, in the same calm and equable tone, the most extraordinary and most trivial events; the apparent absence either of wonder in the writer, or the desire of producing a strong effect on the mind of the reader (4). To illustrate this, no passage can be more striking than the account of her vision,—“And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail thou that art highly favoured, the

(1) This opinion revived so strongly in the time of Domitian, as, according to the Christian historian, to awaken the apprehension of the Roman emperor, who commanded diligent search to be made for all who claimed descent from the line of David. It does not appear how many were discovered, as Eusebius relates the story merely for the purpose of showing that the descendants of our Lord's brethren were brought before the emperor, and dismissed as simple labourers, too humble to be regarded with suspicion. Many families of this lineage may have perished in the exterminating war of Titus, between the birth of Christ and this inquiry of Domitian. In later times the Prince of the Captivity, with what right it would be impossible to decide, traced his descent from the line of the ancient kings. Conf. Casaubon, Exercit. anti-Baron, ii. p. 17.

(2) Luke, i. 26-38.

(3) I cannot discover any great force in the critical arguments adduced to disjoin these preliminary chapters from the rest of the narrative. There is a very remarkable evidence of their authenticity in the curious apocryphal book (the *Ascentio Isaiæ*, published from the *Æthiopie* by Archbishop Lawrence). Compare Gesenius, *Jesais*, Einleitung, p. 50. This writing marks its own date, the end of the reign of Nero, with unusual certainty, and contains distinct allusions to these facts, as forming integral parts of the life of Christ. The events were no doubt treasured in the memory of Mary, and might by her be communicated to the apostles.

(4) I may be in error, but this appears to me the marked and perceptible internal difference between the genuine and apocryphal gospels. The latter are *mythic*, not merely in the matter but also in their style.

Lord is with thee : blessed art thou among women. And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary : for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name *Jesus*. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest : and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David : and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man. And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee : therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy cousin Elizabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age ; and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible. And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her. ”

The incarnation of the Deity, or the union of some part of the Divine Essence with a material or human body, is by no means an uncommon religious notion, more particularly in the East. Yet, in the doctrine as subsequently developed by Christianity, there seems the same important difference which characterises the whole system of the ancient and modern religions. It is in the former a mythological impersonation of the Power, in Christ it is the Goodness of the Deity, which, associating itself with a human form, assumes the character of a representative of the human race; in whose person is exhibited a pure model of moral perfection, and whose triumph over evil is by the slow and gradual progress of enlightening the mind, and softening and purifying the heart. The moral purpose of the descent of the Deity is by no means excluded in the religions, in which a similar notion has prevailed, as neither is that of divine power, though confining itself to acts of pure beneficence, from the Christian scheme. This seems more particularly the case, if we may state any thing with certainty concerning those half-mythological, half-real personages, the Buddha, Gautama, or Somanas Codoma of the remoter East (1). In these systems likewise the overbearing excess of human wickedness demands the interfe-

Incarnation of the Deity.

(1) The characteristic of the Buddhist religion, which in one respect may be considered (I deprecate misconception) the Christianity of the remoter East, seems an union of political with religious reformation; its end to substitute purer morality for the wild and multifarious idolatry into which Brahminism had degenerated, and to break down the distinction of castes. But Buddhism appears to be essentially monastic; and how different the superstitious regard for life in

the Buddhist from the enlightened humanity of Christianity! See Mahony, in *Asiat. Research.* vii. p. 40.

• M. Klaproth has somewhere said, that, “ next to the Christian, no religion has contributed more to ennoble the human race than the Buddhist religion.” Compare likewise the very judicious observations of Wm. Humboldt, *über die Kawi Sprache*, p. 95.

rence, and the restoration of a better order of things is the object, which vindicates the presence of the embodied Deity; yet there is invariably a greater or less connection with the oriental cosmogonical systems; it is the triumph of mind over matter, the termination of the long strife between the two adverse principles. The Christian scheme, however it may occasionally admit the current language of the time, as where Christ is called the "Light of the World," yet in its scope and purport stands clear and independent of all these physical notions: it is original, inasmuch as it is purely, essentially, and exclusively a moral revelation; its sole design to work a moral change; to establish a new relation between man and the Almighty Creator, and to bring to light the great secret of the immortality of man.

Birth from
a virgin.

Hence the only deviation from the course of nature was the birth of this Being from a pure virgin (1). Much has been written on this subject; but it is more consistent with our object to point out the influence of this doctrine upon the human mind, as hence its harmony with the general design of Christianity becomes more manifest.

We estimate very inadequately the influence or the value of any religion, if we merely consider its dogmas, its precepts, or its opinions. The impression it makes, the emotions it awakens, the sentiments which it inspires, are perhaps its most vital and effective energies: from these men continually act; and the character of a particular age is more distinctly marked by the predominance of these silent but universal motives, than by the professed creed, or prevalent philosophy, or in general, by the opinions of the times. Thus, none of the primary facts in the history of a widely-extended religion can be without effect on the character of its believers. The images perpetually presented to the mind, work, as it were, into its

(1) According to a tradition known in the West, at an early period, and quoted by Jeron (Adv. Jovin. c. 26.), Budh was born of a virgin. So were the Fohi of China and the Schaka of Thibet, no doubt the same whether a mythic or a real personage. The Jesuits in China were appalled at finding in the mythology of that country, the counterpart of the "Virgo Deipara." (Barrow's Travels in China, i.) There is something extremely curious in the appearance of the same religious notions in remote, and apparently quite disconnected countries, where it is impossible to trace the secret manner of their transmission. Certain incidents, for example, in the history of the Indian Crishna are so similar to those of the life of Christ, that De Guignaut is almost inclined to believe that they are derived from some very early Christian tradition. In the present instance, however, the peculiar sanctity attributed to virginity in all countries, where the ascetic principle is held in high honour as approximating the pure and passionless human being to the Divinity, might suggest such an origin for a Deity in human form. But the birth of Budh seems purely mythic; he was born from Maia, the virgin goddess of the imaginative

world—as it were the Phantasia of the Greeks who was said by some to have given birth to Homer. The Schaka of Thibet was born from, the nymph Ihamoghni-pral. Georgi. Alph. Tibet. Compare Rosenmuller, das Alte und Neue Morgenland, v. iv.; on Budh and his birth, Bohlen, i. 312.

I am inclined to think that the Jews, though partially orientalised in their opinions, were the people among whom such a notion was least likely to originate of itself. Marriage by the mass of the people was considered in a holy light; and there are traces that the hopes of becoming the mother of the Messiah, was one of the blessings which, in their opinion, belonged to marriage; and after all, before we admit the originality of these notions in some of the systems to which they belong, we must ascertain (the most intricate problem in the history of Eastern religious opinions) their relative antiquity, as compared with the Nestorian Christianity, so widely prevalent in the East, and the effects of this form of Christianity on the more remote Oriental creeds. Jerome's testimony is the most remarkable.

most intimate being, become incorporated with the feelings, and thus powerfully contribute to form the moral nature of the whole race. Nothing could be more appropriate than that the martial Romans should derive their origin from the nursling of the wolf, or from the god of war ; and whether those fables sprung from the national temperament, or contributed to form it, however these fierce images were enshrined in the national traditions, they were at once the emblem and example of that bold and relentless spirit which gradually developed itself, until it had made the Romans the masters of the world. The circumstances of the birth of Christ were as strictly in unison with the design of the religion. This incident seemed to incorporate with the general feeling the deep sense of holiness and gentleness, which was to characterise the followers of Jesus Christ. It was the consecration of sexual purity and maternal tenderness. No doubt by falling in, to a certain degree, with the ascetic spirit of Oriental enthusiasm, the former incidentally tended to confirm the sanctity of celibacy, which for so many ages reigned paramount in the church ; and in the days in which the Virgin Mother was associated with her divine Son in the general adoration, the propensity to this worship was strengthened by its coincidence with the better feelings of our nature, especially among the female sex. Still the substitution of these images for such as formed the symbols of the older religions, was a great advance towards that holier and more humane tone of thought and feeling, with which it was the professed design of the new religion to embue the mind of man (1).

In the marvellous incidents which follow, the visit of the Virgin Mother to her cousin (2) Elizabeth (3), when the joy occasioned by the miraculous conception seemed to communicate itself to the child of which the latter was pregnant, and called forth her ardent expressions of homage : and in the Magnificat, or song of thanksgiving, into which, like Hannah in the older Scriptures, the Virgin broke forth, it is curious to observe how completely and exclusively consistent every expression appears with the state of belief at that period ; all is purely Jewish, and accordant with the prevalent expectation of the national Messiah (4) : there is no word which seems to imply any acquaintance with the unworldly and purely moral na-

Visit to
Elizabeth.

(1) The poetry of this sentiment is beautifully expressed by Wordsworth :—

Mother! whose virgin bosom was uncrostr
With the least shade or thought to sin allied,
Woman, above all women glorified,
O'er-tainted Nature's solitary boast :
Purer than foam on central ocean tost,
Brighter than Eastern skies at daybreak strewn
With forced roses, than th' unblemish'd moon
Before her wane begins on heaven's blue coast.
Thy image falls to earth. Yet sure, I ween,
Not unforgiven the suppliant here might bend
As to a visible power, in whom did blend
All that was mixed and reconciled in thee
Of mother's love, and maiden purity,
Of high with low, celestial with terrene

(2) Elizabeth must have been further removed than a first cousin, for as it is clear that Mary, as well as her husband, were of the line of David, and Elizabeth of the priestly line, the connection must have been formed in a preceding generation.

(3) Luke, i. 39. 50.

(4) Agreeing so far, as the fact, with Strauss, I should draw a directly opposite inference, the high improbability that this remarkable keeping, this pure Judaism, without the intervention of Christian notions, should have been maintained, if this passage had been invented or composed after the complete formation of the Christian scheme.

ture of the redemption, which was subsequently developed. It may perhaps appear too closely to press the terms of that which was the common, almost the proverbial, language of the devotional feelings : yet the expressions which intimate the degradation of the mighty from their seat, the disregard of the wealthy, the elevation of the lowly and the meek, and respect to the low estate of the poor, sound not unlike an allusion to the rejection of the proud and splendid royal race, which had so long ruled the nation, and the assumption of the throne of David by one born in a more humble state (1).

Birth of
John the
Baptist.

After the return of Mary to Nazareth, the birth of John the Baptist excited the attention of the whole of Southern Judæa to the fulfilment of the rest of the prediction. When the child is about to be named, the dumb father interferes ; he writes on a tablet the name by which he desires him to be called, and instantaneously recovers his speech (2). It is not unworthy of remark, that in this hymn of thanksgiving, the part which was to be assigned to John in the promulgation of the new faith, and his subordination to the unborn Messiah, are distinctly announced. Already, while one is but a new-born infant, the other scarcely conceived in the womb of his mother, they have assumed their separate stations : the child of Elizabeth is announced as the prophet of the Highest, who shall go "before the face of the Lord, to prepare his ways." Yet even here the Jewish notion predominates : the first object of the Messiah's coming, is that the children of Israel "should be saved from their enemies and from the hand of all that hate them ; that they being delivered from the hand of their enemies, might serve him without fear (3)."

Journey to
Bethle-
hem.

As the period approaches at which the child of Mary is to be born, an apparently fortuitous circumstance summons both Joseph and the Virgin Mother from their residence in the unpopular town of Nazareth, in the province of Galilee, to Bethlehem, a small village to the south of Jerusalem (4). Joseph on the discovery of the pregnancy of his betrothed, being a man of gentle (5) character, had been willing to spare her the rigorous punishment enacted by the law in such cases, and determined on a private dissolution of the marriage (6). A vision however warned him of the real state of the

(1) Neander in his recently published work has made similar observations on the Jewish notions in the song of Simeon. *Leben Jesu*, p. 26.

(2) Luke, i. 57. 80.

(3) Even the expression the "remission of sins," which to a Christian ear may learn a different sense, to the Jew would convey a much narrower meaning. All calamity being a mark of the divine displeasure, was an evidence of sin ; every mark of divine favour therefore an evidence of divine forgiveness. The expression is frequently used in its Jewish sense in the book of Maccabees. 1 Macc. iii. 8.; 2 Macc. viii. 5. 27. and 29.; vii. 98. Le Clerc has made a similar observation (note in loc.) but is opposed by Whitty, who however does not appear to

have been very profoundly acquainted with Jewish phraseology.

(4) Matt. i. 18. 25.

(5) Grotius, in loc. from Chrysostom.

(6) A bill of divorce was necessary, even when the parties were only betrothed, and where the marriage had not actually been solemnised. It is probable that the Mosaic law, which in such cases adjudged a female to death (Deut. xx 23—25.), was not at this time executed in its original rigour. It appears from Abarbanel (Buxtorf, de Divort.) that in certain cases a betrothed maiden might be divorced without stating the cause in the bill of divorce. This is the meaning of the word *ῥαβρα*, secretly. Grotius, in loc.

case, and he no longer hesitated, though abstaining from all connection, to take her to his home; and accordingly, being of the same descent, she accompanied him to Bethlehem. This town, as the birthplace of David, had always been consecrated in the memory of the Jews with peculiar reverence; and no prediction in the Old Testament appears more distinct, than that which assigns for the nativity of the great Prince, who was to perpetuate the line of David, the same town which had given birth to his royal ancestor (1).

The decree of the Emperor Augustus (2), in obedience to which the whole population of Palestine was to be enrolled and registered, has been, and still remains, an endless subject of controversy (3). One point seems clear, that the enrolment must have been of the nature of a population census; for any property, possessed by Joseph or Mary, must have been at Nazareth; and the enrolment, which seems to have included both husband and wife, was made at the place where the genealogical registers of the tribes were kept. About this period Josephus gives an account of an oath of allegiance and of fidelity, to Cæsar and to the interests of the reigning sovereign, which was to be taken by the whole Jewish nation. The affair of this oath is strangely mingled up with predictions of a change of dynasty, and with the expected appearance of a great king, under whose all powerful reign the most extraordinary events were to take place. Six thousand of the Pharisees, the violent religious party, resolutely refused to take the oath. They were fined, and their fine discharged by the low-born wife of Pheroras, the brother of Herod, into whose line certain impostors or enthusiasts, pretending to the gift of prophecy, had declared that the succession was to pass (4). An eunuch, Bagoas, to whom they had promised peculiar and miraculous advantages during the reign of the great predicted king (5), was implicated in this conspiracy, and suffered death, with many of the

Decree of
Augustus.

(1) Micah, v. 2.

(2) Luke, ii. 1. 7.

(3) The great difficulty arises from the introduction of the name of Cyrenius as the governor, under whose direction the enrolment, or, as it is no doubt translated in our version, the taxation, took place. But it is well known that Cyrenius did not become governor of Syria till several years later. The most usual way of accounting for this difficulty, adopted by Lardner and Paley, is the natural one of supposing that Cyrenius conducted the transaction, while holding a subordinate situation in the province, of which he afterwards became governor, and superintended a more regular taxation. But Mr. Greswell has recently adduced strong reasons for questioning whether Cyrenius could have been at this time in Palestine; and I agree with him, that such a census must have been made by the native authorities under Herod. The alternative remains either to suppose some error in the Gospel of St. Luke, as it now stands; or to adopt another version. That followed by Mr. Greswell, notwithstanding his *apparent* authorities, sounds to me quite irreconcilable with the genius of the Greek language. There cannot perhaps be

found a more brief and satisfactory summary of the different opinions on this subject, than in the common book, Ebley's Annotations on the Gospels. Tholuck, in his answer to Strauss, has examined the question at great length, pp. 162—198. Neander fairly admits the possibility of a mistake in a point of this kind, on the part of the Evangelists, *Leben Jesu*, p. 19. With him I am at a loss to conceive how Dr. Strauss can imagine a myth in such a plain prosaic sentence.

(4) Though inclined to agree with Lardner in supposing that the census or population-return mentioned by St. Luke was connected with the oath of fidelity to Augustus and to Herod, I cannot enter into his notion, that the whole circumstantial and highly credible statement of Josephus is but a maliciously disguised account of the incidents which took place at the birth of Christ. Lardner's Works, vol. i. (4to edit.) p. 152.

(5) Independent of the nature of this promise, on which I am intentionally silent, the text of Josephus (*Ant.* xvii. 2. 6.) is unintelligible as it stands, nor is the emendation, proposed by Ward, a friend of Lardner's, though ingenious, altogether satisfactory. *Ibid.*

obstinate Pharisees and of Herod's kindred. It is highly probable that the administration of the oath of allegiance in Josephus, and the census in St. Luke, belong to the same transaction ; for if the oath was to be taken by all the subjects of Herod, a general enrolment would be necessary throughout his dominions ; and it was likely, according to Jewish usage, that this enrolment would be conducted according to the established divisions of the tribes (1). If however the expectation of the Messiah had penetrated even into the palace of Herod ; if it had been made use of in the intrigues and dissensions among the separate branches of his family ; if the strong religious faction had not scrupled to assume the character of divinely-inspired prophets, and to proclaim an immediate change of dynasty, the whole conduct of Herod, as described by the evangelists, harmonises in a most singular manner with the circumstances of the times. Though the birth of Jesus might appear to Herod but as an insignificant episode in the more dangerous tragic plot which was unfolding itself in his own family, yet his jealous apprehension at the very name of a new-born native king, would seize at once on the most trifling cause of suspicion ; and the judicial massacre of many of the most influential of the Pharisees, and of his own kindred in Jerusalem, which took place on the discovery of this plot, was a fitting prelude for the slaughter of all the children under a certain age in Bethlehem.

Birth of
Christ.

But whether the enrolment, which summoned Joseph and Mary to the town where the registers of their descent were kept, was connected with this oath of fidelity to the emperor and the king ; or whether it was only a population-return, made by the command of the emperor, in all the provinces where the Roman sovereignty or influence extended (2), it singularly contributed to the completion of the prophecy to which we have alluded, which designated the city of David as the birth-place of the Messiah. Those who claimed descent from the families, whose original possessions were in the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, crowded the whole of the small town ; and in the stable of the inn or caravansera was born **THE CHILD**, whose moral doctrines, if adopted throughout the world, would destroy more than half the misery by destroying all the vice and mutual hostility of men ; and who has been for centuries considered the object of adoration, as the Divine Mediator between God and man, by the most civilised and enlightened nations of the earth. Of

(1) The chronological difficulties in this case do not appear to me of great importance, as the whole affair of the oath may have occupied some time, and the enrolment may have taken place somewhat later in the provinces than in the capital.

(2) This view is maintained by Tholuck, and seems to receive some support from the high authority of Savigny, writing on another subject. It is supported by two passages of late

writers, Isidore and Cassiodorus. Augusti siquidem temporibus orbis Romanus agris divisus, et assidue descriptus est, ut possessio sua liberetur incerta, quam pro tributorum operat quantitate solvenda. Of itself the authority of Cassiodorus, though a sensible writer, could have no great weight ; but he may have read in my works unknown to us on this period of Jewish history, of which we possess singularly imperfect information.

this immediate epoch only one incident is recorded ; but in all the early history of Christianity, nothing is more beautiful, nor in more perfect unison with the future character of the religion, than the first revelation of its benign principles, by voices from heaven to the lowly shepherds (1). The proclamation of "Glory to God, Peace on earth and good will towards men," is not made by day, but in the quiet stillness of the night (2) ; not in the stately temple of the ancient worship, but among the peaceful pastures ; not to the religious senate of the Jewish people, or to the priesthood arrayed in all the splendour of public ministration, but to peasants employed on their lowly occupation (3).

In eight days, according to the law, the child was initiated into the race of Abraham, by the rite of circumcision : and when the forty days of purification, likewise appointed by the statute, are over, the Virgin Mother hastens to make the customary presentation of the first-born male in the temple. Her offering is that of the poorer Jewish females, who, while the more wealthy made an oblation of a lamb, were content with the least costly, a pair of turtle doves, or two young pigeons (4). Only two persons are recorded as having any knowledge of the future destiny of the child, Anna, a woman endowed with a prophetic character, and the aged Simeon. That Simeon (5) was not the celebrated master of the schools of Jewish learning, the son of Hillel, and the father of Gamaliel, is fairly inferred from the silence of St. Luke, who, though chiefly writing for the Greek converts, would scarcely have omitted to state distinctly the testimony of so distinguished a man to the Messiahship of Jesus. There are other insurmountable historical objections (6). Though occurrences among the more devout wor-

(1) Luke ii. 8. 20.

(2) Neander has well observed that the modesty of this quiet scene is not in accordance with what might be expected from the fertility and boldness of mythic invention.

(3) The year in which Christ was born is still contested. There is still more uncertainty concerning the time of the year, which learned men are still labouring to determine. Where there is and can be no certainty, it is the wisest course to acknowledge our ignorance, and not to claim the authority of historic truth for that which is purely conjectural. The two ablest modern writers who have investigated the chronology of the life of Christ, Dr. Burton and Mr. Greswell, have come to opposite conclusions, one contending for the spring, the other for the autumn. Even if the argument of either had any solid ground to rest on, it would be difficult (would it be worth while ?) to extirpate the traditional belief, so beautifully embodied in Milton's Hymn :—

It was the winter wild
When the heaven-born child, etc

Were the point of the least importance, we should, no doubt, have known more about it. Quid tandem refert annum et diem exortum in his ignorare, quum apparuisse illud, et cæcis hominum mentibus illuxisse constet, neque sit, quod obsistat nobis, ne splendore ac calore ejus utamur.

mur.—Mosheim. There is a good essay in the *Opuscula* of Jablonski, iii. 317. on the origin of the festivity of Christmas Day.

(4) Luke ii. 21. 39.

(5) This was the notion of Lightfoot, who, though often invaluable as interpreting the New Testament from Jewish usages, is sometimes misled by his Rabbinism into fanciful analogies and illustrations, *Hist. Jews*, iii. 97. note.

(6) Our first and not least embarrassing difficulty in harmonising the facts recorded in the several Gospels, is the relative priority of the presentation in the temple and the visit of the Magians to Bethlehem. On one side there appears no reason for the return of the parents and the child, after the presentation, to Bethlehem, where they appear to have had no friends, and where the object of their visit was most probably effected : on the other hand, it is still more improbable, that, after the visit of the Magians, they should rush, as it were, into the very jaws of danger, by visiting Jerusalem, after the jealousy of Herod was awakened. Yet in both cases, it should be remembered that Bethlehem was but six miles, or two hours' journey, from Jerusalem. *Ireland, Palestina*, p. 424. See, on one side, Schleiermacher's *Essay on St. Luke*, p. 47, though I entirely dissent on this point from the explanation of this author, on the other, Hug's Introduction.

Simeon. shippers in the temple, were perhaps less likely to reach the ear of Herod than those in any other part of the city, yet it was impossible that the solemn act of recognising the Messiah in the infant son of Mary, on so public a scene, by a man whose language and conduct was watched by the whole people, could escape observation. Such an acknowledgment, by so high an authority, would immediately have been noised abroad; no prudence could have suppressed the instantaneous excitement. Besides this, if alive at this time, Simeon, Ben Hillel, would have presided in the court of inquiry, summoned by Herod, after the appearance of the Magi. The most remarkable point in the benediction of Simeon is the prediction that the child, who it would have been supposed would have caused unmingled pride and joy, should also be the cause of the deepest sorrow to his mother; and of the most fearful calamities, as well as of glory, to the nation (1).

His benediction.

The intercommunion of opinions between the Jewish and Zoroastrian religions throws great light on the visit of the Magi, or **The Magi.** Wise Men, to Jerusalem. The impregnation of the Jewish notions about the Messiah with the Magian doctrines of the final triumph of Ormusd, makes it by no means improbable that, on the other side, the national doctrines of the Jews may have worked their way into the popular belief of the East, or at least into the opinions of those among the Magian hierarchy, who had come more immediately into contact with the Babylonian Jews (2). From them they may have adopted the expectation of the Great Principle of Light in a human form, and descending, according to ancient prophecy, from the race of Israel: and thus have been prepared to set forth, at the first appearance of the luminous body, by which they were led to Judæa (3). The universal usage of the East, never to approach the presence of a superior, particularly a sovereign, without some precious gift, is naturally exemplified in their costly but portable offerings of gold, myrrh, and frankincense (4).

The appearance of these strangers in Jerusalem at this critical

(1) Matt. ii. 1—12.

(2) The communication with Babylonia at this period was constant and regular; so much so, that Herod fortified and garrisoned a strong castle, placed under a Babylonian commander, to protect the caravans from this quarter from the untameable robbers of the Trachonitis, the district east of the Jordan and of the sea of Tiberias.

(3) What this luminous celestial appearance has been debated with unwearied activity. I would refer more particularly to the work of Ideler, *Handbuch der Chronologie*, ii. 399. There will be found, very clearly stated, the opinion of Kepler (adopted by bishop Munter), which explains it as a conjunction between Jupiter and Saturn.

For my own part, I cannot understand why the words of St. Matthew, relating to such a subject, are to be so rigidly interpreted; the same latitude of expression may be allowed on astronomi-

cal subjects, as necessarily must be in the Old Testament. The vagueness and uncertainty, possibly the scientific inaccuracy, seem to me the inevitable consequences of the manner in which such circumstances must have been preserved, as handed down, and subsequently reduced to writing by simple persons, awe-struck under such extraordinary events.

(4) It is the general opinion that the Magi came from Arabia. Pliny and Plutony (Grotius, in Loc.) name Arabian Magi; and the gifts were considered the produce of that country. But in fact gold, myrrh, and frankincense, are too common in the East, and too generally used as presents to a superior, to indicate, with any certainty, the place from whence they came. If, indeed, by Arabia he meant not the peninsula, but the whole district reaching to the Euphrates, this notion may be true; but it is more probable that they came from beyond the Euphrates.

period, particularly if considered in connection with the conspiracy in the family of Herod and among the religious faction, as it excited an extraordinary sensation through the whole city, would re-awaken all the watchfulness of the monarch. The assemblage of the religious authorities, in order that they might judiciously declare the place from which the Messiah was expected, might be intended not merely to direct the ministers of the royal vengeance to the quarter from whence danger was to be apprehended, but to force the acknowledged interpreters of the sacred writings to an authoritative declaration as to the circumstances of the Messiah's birth; so, if any event should occur, contrary to their version of the prophecies, either to commit them on the side of the ruling powers, or altogether to invalidate the expectation, that was dangerously brooding in the popular mind. The subtlety of Herod's character is as strikingly exhibited in his pretended resolution to join the Magians in their worship of the new-born king, as his relentless decision, when the Magians did not return to Jerusalem, in commanding the general massacre of all the infants under the age of two years, in Bethlehem and its district (1).

Magi in
Jerusalem.

Egypt, where, by divine command, the parents of Jesus took refuge, was but a few days' journey, on a line perpetually frequented by regular caravans; and in that country, those who fled from Palestine could scarcely fail to meet with hospitable reception, among some of that second nation of Jews, who inhabited Alexandria and its neighbourhood (2).

Flight into
Egypt.

On their return from Egypt, after the death of Herod, (which took place in the ensuing year, though the parents of Jesus did not leave Egypt till the accession of Archelaus), Joseph, justly appre-

Return to
Galilee.

(1) The murder of the innocents is a curious instance of the reaction of legendary extravagance on the plain truth of the evangelic history. The Greek church canonised the 14,000 innocents; and another notion, founded on a misrepresentation of Revelations (xiv. 3.), swelled the number to 144,000. The former, at least, was the common belief of the church, though even in our liturgy the latter has in some degree been sanctioned, by retaining the chapter of Revelations as the epistle for the day. Even later, Jeremy Taylor, in his Life of Christ, admits the 14,000 without scruple, or rather without thought. The error did not escape the notice of the acute adversaries of Christianity, who, impeaching this extravagant tale, attempted to bring the evangelic narrative into discredit. Vossius, I believe, was the first divine who pointed out the monstrous absurdity of supposing such a number of infant children in so small a village. *Matth. ii. 13—18.*

(2) Some of the rabbinical stories accuse Jesus of having brought "his enchantments" out of Egypt. (*Lightfoot, xi. 45.*) There is no satisfactory evidence to the antiquity of these notions, or, absurd as they are, they might be some testimony to the authenticity of this part of the

Christian history. See also Eisenmenger, i. p. 150.

The Jewish fiction of the birth of Jesus is at least as old as the time of Celsus (*Origen contra Cels. 1.*), but bears the impress of hostile malice, in assigning as his parent a Roman soldier. This is the fable which was perpetuated from that time by Jewish animosity, till it assumed its most obnoxious form in the Toldoth Jesu. How much more natural and credible than the minute detail which so obviously betrays later and hostile invention, the vague inquiry of his own compatriots—"Is not this the carpenter's son?" *Matth. xiii. 55.*

The answer of Origen to this Jewish invention is sensible and judicious. The Christians, if such a story had been true, would have invented something more directly opposed to the real truth; they would not have agreed so far with the relation, but rather carefully suppressed every allusion to the extraordinary birth of Jesus. *Ἐδύνατο γὰρ ἀλλ' ὡς ψευδοποιεῖσθαι διὰ τὸ σοφῶς παράδοξον τῇ ἱστορίᾳ, καὶ μὴ ὥσπερ ἀκουσίως συγκαταβῆσθαι ὅτι οὐκ ἀπὸ συνηθῶν ἀνθρώπων γάμων ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐγενήθη.* *Contra Cels. i. 32.*

hensive that the son might inherit the jealousy and relentless disposition of the father, of which he had already given fearful indications, retired to his former residence in Galilee, under the less suspicious dominion of Herod Antipas (1). There the general prejudice against Galilee might be their best security ; and the universal belief that it was in Judæa that the great king was to assume his sovereignty, would render their situation less perilous ; for it was the throne of the monarch of Judah, the dominion of the ruler in Jerusalem, rather than the government of the Galilean tetrarch, which would have been considered in danger from the appearance of the Messiah.

(1) Matt. xi. 19. 23 Luke, xi. 40.

APPENDIX TO CHAPTER II.

I.

RECENT LIVES OF CHRIST.

At the time when this part of the present work was written, the ultra-rationalist work of Professor Paulus, the *Leben Jesu*, (Heidelberg, 1828,) was the most recent publication. Since that time have appeared, the *Life of Jesus*, *Das Leben Jesu*, by Dr. D. F. Strauss, (2d edition, Tübingen, 1837) and the counter publication of Neander, *Das Leben Jesu* (Berlin, 1837); to say nothing of a great number of controversial pamphlets and reviews, arising out of the work of Dr. Strauss.

This work (consisting of two thick and closely printed volumes of nearly 800 pages each) is a grave and elaborate exposition of an extraordinary hypothesis, which Dr. Strauss offers, in order to reconcile Christianity with the advancing intelligence of mankind, which is weary and dissatisfied with all previous philosophical and rationalist theories. Dr. Strauss solemnly declares, that the essence of Christianity is entirely independent of his critical remarks. "The supernatural birth of Christ, his miracles, his resurrection and ascension, remain eternal truths, however *their reality, as historical facts, may be called in question* (1)." He refers to a dissertation at the close of his work, "to show that the doctrinal contents of the *Life of Jesus* are uninjured; and that the calmness and cold bloodedness with which his criticism proceeds in its dangerous operations can only be explained by his conviction, that it is not in the least prejudicial to Christian faith." That dissertation, which opens (t. ii. p. 691.) with a singularly eloquent description of the total destruction which this remorseless criticism has made in the ordinary grounds of Christian faith and practice, I have read with much attention. But what resting place it proposes to substitute for Christian faith, I have been unable to discover; and must acknowledge my unwillingness to abandon the firm ground of historical evidence, to place myself on any sublime but unsubstantial cloud which may be offered by a mystic and unintelligible philosophy. Especially as I find Dr. Strauss himself coolly contemplating at the close of his work the desolating effects of his own arguments, looking about in vain for the unsubstantial tenets which he has extirpated by his uncompromising logic; and plainly admitting, that if he has shattered to pieces the edifice of Christianity, it is not his fault.

But Christianity will survive the criticism of Dr. Strauss.

I would however calmly consider the first principles of this work, which appear to me, in many respects, singularly narrow and unphilosophical — by no means formed on an extensive and complete view of the whole case, and resting on grounds which, in my judgment, would be subversive of all history.

The hypothesis of Dr. Strauss is, that the whole history of our Lord, as related in the Gospels, is mythic, that is to say, a kind of imaginative amplification of certain vague and slender traditions, the germ of which it is now impossible to

(1) Christi übernatürliche Geburt, seine Wunder, seine Auferstehung und Himmelfahrt bleiben ewige Wahrheiten, so sehr ihre Wirklichkeit als historische Facta angezweifelt werden mag. Vorrede, xii.

trace. These myths are partly what he calls historical, partly philosophic, formed with the design of developing an ideal character of Jesus, and to harmonise that character with the Jewish notions of the Messiah. In order to prove this, the whole intermediate part of the work is a most elaborate, and it would be uncandid not to say, a singularly skilful examination of the difficulties and discrepancies in the Gospels; and a perpetual endeavour to show, in what manner and with what design, each separate myth assumed its present form.

Arguing on the ground of Dr. Strauss, I would urge the following objections, which appear to me fatal to his whole system:—

First, The hypothesis of Strauss is unphilosophical, because it assumes dogmatically the principal point in dispute. His first canon of criticism is (t. i. p. 103), that wherever there is any thing supernatural, angelic appearance, miracle, or interposition of the Deity, there we may presume a myth. Thus he concludes, both against the supernaturalists, as they are called in Germany, and the general mass of Christian believers of all sects in this country, that any recorded interference with the ordinary and experienced order of causation must be unhistorical and untrue; and even against the rationalists, that these wonders did not even *apparently* take place, having been supposed to be miraculous, from the *superstition* or ignorance of physical causes among the spectators: they cannot be even the honest, though mistaken, reports of eye-witnesses.

But secondly, The *belief* in some of those supernatural events, *c. g.* the resurrection, is indispensable to the existence of the religion; to suppose that this belief grew up, after the religion was formed; to assume these primary facts as after-thoughts, seems to me an absolute impossibility. But if they, or any one of them, were integral parts of the religion from its earliest origin, though they may possibly have been subsequently embellished, or unfaithfully recorded in the Gospels, their supernatural character is no evidence that they are so.

Thirdly, Besides this inevitable inference, that the religion could not have subsequently invented that which was the foundation of the religion,—that these things *must have been* the belief of the first Christian communities,—there is distinct evidence in the Acts of the Apostles, (though Dr. Strauss, it seems, would involve that book in the fate of the Gospels,) in the apostolical Epistles, and in every written document and tradition, that they were so. The general harmony of these three distinct classes of records, as to the main preternatural facts in the Gospels, proves incontestably that they were not the slow growth of a subsequent period, embodied in narratives composed in the second century.

For fourthly, Dr. Strauss has by no means examined the evidence for the early existence of the Gospels with the rigid diligence which characterises the rest of his work. I think he does not fairly state that the early notices of the Gospels, in the works of the primitive fathers, show not only their existence but their general reception among the Christian communities, which imply both a much earlier composition and some strong grounds for their authenticity. As to the time when the Gospels were composed, his argument seems to me self-destructive. The later he supposes them to have been written, the more impossible (considering that the Christians were then so widely disseminated in Europe and Asia) is their accordance with each other in the same design or the same motives for fiction: if he takes an earlier date, he has no room for his long process of mythic development. In one place he appears to admit that the three first, at least, must have been completed between the death of our Lord and the destruction of Jerusalem, less than forty years. (I myself consider their silence, or rather their obscure and confused prophetic allusions to that event, as absolutely decisive on this point, with regard to all the four.) But is it conceivable that in this narrow period, this mythic spirit should have been so prolific, and the primitive simplicity of the Christian history have been so embellished, and then universally received by the *first* generation of believers?

The place, as well as the period, of their composition, is encumbered with difficulties according to this system. Where were they written? If all, or rather the three first, in Palestine, whence their general acceptance without direct and acknowledged authority? If in different parts of the world, their general acceptance is equally improbable; their similarity of design and object, altogether unaccountable.

Were they written with this mythic latitude by Judaising or Hellenising Christians? If by Judaising I should expect to find far more of Judaism, of Jewish tradition, usage, and language, as appears to have been the case in the Ebionitish Gospel; if by Hellenising, the attempt to frame the myths in accordance with Jewish traditions is inconceivable ⁽¹⁾. They Judaize too little for the Petrine Christians, (that is, those who considered the Gospel in some sort a re-enactment of the Mosaic law,) too much for the followers of St. Paul, who rejected the law.

The other canons of Dr. Strauss seem to me subversive of all history. Every thing extraordinary or improbable, the prophetic anticipations of youthful ambition, complete revolution in individual character, (he appears to allude to the change in the character of the apostles after the resurrection, usually, and in my opinion justly, considered as one of the strongest arguments of the truth of the narrative,) though he admits that this canon is to be applied with caution, are presumptive of a mythic character.

If discrepancies in the circumstances between narratives of the same events, or differences of arrangement in point of time, particularly among rude and unartificial writers, are to be admitted as proofs of this kind of fiction, all history is mythic; even the accounts of every transaction in the daily papers, which are never found to agree precisely in the minute details, are likewise mythic.

To these which appear to me conclusive arguments against the hypothesis of Dr. Strauss, I would add some observations, which to my mind are general maxims, which must be applied to all such discussions.

No religion is in its *origin* mythic. Mythologists embellish, adapt, modify, idealise, clothe in allegory or symbol, received and acknowledged truths. This is a later process, and addressed to the imagination, already excited and prepared to receive established doctrines or opinions in this new form. But in Christianity (according to Dr. Strauss's hypothesis) what was the first impulse, the germ of all this high-wrought and successful idealisation?—Nothing more than the existence of a man named Jesus, who obtained a few followers, and was put to death as a malefactor, without any pretensions on his part to a superior character, either as a divine or a divinely commissioned being, or as the expected Messiah of the Jews. Whatever extorted by the necessity of the case, is added to this primary conception of the character of Jesus, in order sufficiently to awaken the human mind to a new religion connected with his name, belief of his miraculous powers, of his resurrection, of his Messiahship, even of his more than human virtue and wisdom, tends to verify the delineation of his character in his Gospels, as the original object of admiration and belief to his followers; and to anticipate and preclude, as it were, its being a subsequent mythic invention.

Can the period in which Jesus appeared be justly considered a mythic age? If by mythic age (and I do not think Dr. Strauss very rigid and philosophical in the use of the term) be meant an age, in which there was a general and even superstitious belief, in wonders and prodigies, mingled up with much cool

(1) Dr. Strauss, for instance, asserts all the passages relating to the miraculous birth of Christ (the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke), and those which relate his baptism by St. John, to have proceeded from two distinct classes of Christians, differing materially, or rather directly opposed to each other in their notions of the Messiah, a Judaising and an anti-Judaic sect. See vol. i. pp. 446—448. We must find time not merely for the growth and development of both notions, but for their blending into one system, and the general adoption of that system by the Christian communities.

incredulity, this cannot be denied. The prodigies which are related by grave historians, as taking place at the death of Cæsar; those which Josephus, who is disposed to rationalise many of the miracles of the early history of his people, describes during the capture of Jerusalem, are enough, out of the countless instances which could be adduced, to determine the question. But if the term *mythic* be more properly applied to that idealisation, that investing religious doctrines in allegory or symbol; above all, that elevating into a deity a man only distinguished for moral excellence (the deification of the Roman emperors was a political act), this appears to me to be repugnant to the genius of the time and of the country. Among the Jewish traditions in the Talmud, there is much fable, much parable, much apologue; as far as I can discern, nothing strictly speaking *mythic*. Philo's is a kind of poetico-philosophic rationalism. The later legends, of Simon Magus, Alexander in Lucian, and Apollonius of Tyana, are subsequent inventions, after the imaginative impulse given by Christianity, possibly imitative of the Gospels (1).

I would be understood, however, as laying the least stress upon this argument, as this tendency to imaginative excitement and creation does not depend so much on the age as on the state of civilisation, which perhaps in the East, has never become completely exempt from this tendency.

But I cannot admit the spurious Gospels, which seem to me the manifest offspring of Gnostic and heretical sects, and to have been composed at periods which historical criticism might designate from internal evidence, though clearly *mythical*, to involve the genuine Gospels in the same proscription. To a discriminating and unprejudiced mind, I would rest the distinction between mythical and non-mythical on the comparison between the apocryphal and canonical Gospels.

Neander, in my opinion, has exercised a very sound judgment in declining direct controversy with Dr. Strauss; for controversy, even conducted in the calm and Christian spirit of Neander, rarely works conviction, except in those who are already convinced. He has chosen the better course of giving a fair and candid view of the opposite side of the question, and of exhibiting the accordance of the ordinary view of the origin and authority of the Gospels with sound reason and advanced philosophy. He has dissembled no difficulties, and appealed to no passions. It affords me much satisfaction to find that, although my plan did not require or admit of such minute investigation, I have anticipated many of the conclusions of Neander. In many respects the point of view, from which I have looked at the subject, is altogether different; and, as I have preferred to leave my own work in its original form, though some of the difficulties and discrepancies on which Dr. Strauss dwells may, I trust, be reasonably accounted for in the following chapters of my work, this will be only incidentally; the full counter-statement, prepared with constant reference to Dr. Strauss's book, must be sought in the work of Neander.

It accords even less with the design of my work, which is rather to trace the influence and effect of Christian opinions, than rigidly to investigate their origin or to establish their truth, to notice the various particular animadversions on Dr. Strauss which might suggest themselves; yet I have added some few observations on certain points, when they have crossed the course of my narrative.

The best answer to Strauss is to show that a clear, consistent, and probable narrative can be formed out of that of the four Gospels, without more violence, I will venture to say, than any historian ever found necessary to harmonise four contemporary chronicles of the same events; and with a general accordance with the history, customs, habits, and opinions of the times, altogether irreconcilable with the poetic character of *mythic* history.

(1) The nearest approach to the *mythic*, would, by Simon Magus among the Samaritans, and alluded to in the Acts, perhaps be the kind of divine character assumed

The inexhaustible fertility of German speculation has now displayed itself in another original and elaborate work, *Die Evangelische Geschichte, Kritisch und Philosophisch bearbeitet*, Von Ch. Hermann Weisse. 2 bände. Leipzig, 1838. Dr. Weisse repudiates the theory of Strauss. If he does not bring us to the cold and dreary conclusion of Strauss, or land us on the Nova Zembla of that writer, he leaves us enveloped in a vague and indistinct mist, in which we discern nothing clear, distinct, or satisfactory.

The critical system of Weisse rests on two leading points: — The assumption of the Gospel of St. Mark as the primitive gospel, — a theory which has been advanced before, but which no writer has wrought out with so much elaborate diligence as Weisse; — and an hostility which leads to the virtual rejection of the Gospel of St. John as almost entirely spurious. With regard to St. Mark's Gospel he receives the tradition of Papias, that it was written from the dictation, or at least from information obtained from St. Peter. St. Matthew's was formed from the incorporation of the Gospel of the Hebrews with the *λογια*, a collection of speeches attributed to our Lord. As to St. John's, he submits it to the test of his own arbitrary, and it appears to me, however they may be called critical, very narrow and unphilosophical laws of probability.

The theory by which Weisse would reconcile and harmonise what he retains of the evangelic history with what he considers the highest philosophy, I must confess my inability to comprehend, and must plead as my excuse, that he admits it to be unintelligible to those who are not acquainted with some of his former philosophical works, which I have not at my command. What I do comprehend it would be impossible to explain, as the philosophical language of Germany would, if retained, be entirely without meaning to most readers, and is untranslatable into a foreign tongue.

Weisse retains a much larger and more solid substratum of historic fact than Strauss; and though he may be called a mythic interpreter, his mythic system seems to me entirely different from that of Strauss. With the latter the historic facts are, in general, pure fictions, wrought out of preconceived Jewish notions; with Weisse they are symbolic rather than mythic. In some cases they arise from the mistake of symbolic action for real fact; as, for instance, the notion of the feeding the multitudes in the desert arose out of the mystic language of the Saviour, relating to spiritual nourishment by the bread of life. In other parts he adopts the language of Vico, which has found so much favour in Germany, but which I confess, when gravely applied to history, and followed out to an extent, I conceive, scarcely anticipated by its author, appears to me to be one of the most monstrous improbabilities which has ever passed current under the garb of philosophy. Individual historical characters are merely symbols of the age in which they live, — ideal personifications, as it were, of the imagination, without any actual or personal existence. Thus the elder Herod (Weisse is speaking of the massacre of the innocents) is the symbol, the representation of worldly power. And so the tyrant of the Jews is sublimated into an allegory.

Weisse, however, in his own *sense*, distinctly asserts the divinity of the religion and of our Lord himself.

I mention this book for several reasons, first, because, although it is written in a tone of bold, and, with us it would seem, presumptuous speculation, and ends, in my opinion, in a kind of unsatisfactory mysticism, it contains much profound and extremely beautiful thought.

Secondly, because in its system of interpretation it seems to me to bear a remarkable resemblance to that of Philo and the better part of the Alexandrian school, — it is to the New Testament, what they were to the Old.

Lastly, to show that the German mind itself has been startled by the conclusions, to which the stern and remorseless logic of Strauss has pushed on the historical criticism of rationalism; and that, even where there is no tendency to

return to the old system of religious interpretation, there is not merely strong discontent with the new, but a manifest yearning for a loftier and more consistent harmony between the religion of the Gospels and true philosophy, than has yet been effected by any of the remarkable writers, who have attempted this reconciliation.

APPENDIX II.

ORIGIN OF THE GOSPELS.

THE question concerning the origin of the three first Gospels, both before and subsequent to the publication of Bishop Marsh's *Michaelis*, has assumed every possible form; and, it may be safely asserted, that no one victorious theory has gained any thing like a general assent among the learned. Every conceivable hypothesis has found its advocates; the priority of each of the Evangelists has been maintained with erudition and ingenuity; each has been considered the primary authority, which has been copied by the others. But the hypothesis of one or more common sources, from which all three derived their materials (the view supported with so much ingenuity and erudition by the Bishop of Peterborough), has in its turn shared the common fate.

This inexhaustible question, though less actively agitated, still continues to occupy the attention of biblical critics in Germany. I cannot help suspecting, that the best solution of this intricate problem lies near the surface (1). The incidents of the Saviour's life and death, the contents of the Gospels, necessarily formed a considerable part of the oral teaching, or, if not of the oral teaching, of oral communication, among the first propagators of Christianity (2). These incidents would be repeated and dwelt upon with different degrees of frequency and perhaps distinctness, according to their relative importance. While, on the one hand, from the number of teachers, scattered at least through Palestine, and probably in many other parts of the Roman empire, many varieties of expression, much of that unintentional difference of colouring which every narrative receives by frequent repetition, would unavoidably arise; on the other, there would be a kind of sanctity attributed to the precise expressions of the apostles, if recollected, which would insure on many points a similarity, a perfect identity, of language. We cannot suppose but that these incidents and even's in the life of Christ, these parables and doctrines delivered by himself, thus orally communicated in the course of public teaching and in private, received with such zealous avidity, treasured as of such inestimable importance, would be perpetually written down, if not as yet in continuous narratives, in numerous and accumulating fragments, by the Christian community, or some

(1) It would be difficult to point out a clearer and more satisfactory exposition of any controversy, than that of this great question in biblical criticism, by Mr. Thirlwall in his preface to Schleiermacher's *Essay on St. Luke*.

(2) I have considered the objections urged by Hug, and more recently with great force by Weiss, (p. 20. et seq.) to this theory, the more important of which resolve themselves into the undoubted fact, that it was a *creed* and not a *history*, which, in all the accounts we have in the Acts of the Apostles and elsewhere, formed the subject of oral teaching. This is doubtless true, but, resting as the creed did upon the history, containing no doubt in its primitive form a very few simple articles, would it not necessarily

awaken curiosity as to the historic facts, and would not that curiosity demand, as it were, to be satisfied? The more belief swarmed into piety, the more insatiably would it require, and the more would the teacher be disposed, to gratify this awakened interest and eagerness for information on every point that related to the Redeemer. The formal public teaching no doubt confined itself to the enforcement of the creed, and to combating Jewish or heathen objections, and confuting Judaism or idolatry. But in private intercourse, when the minds of both instructor or hearer were exclusively full of these subjects, would not the development of the history, in more or less detail, be a necessary and unavoidable consequence?

one or more distinguished members of it. They would record, as far as possible, the *ipsissima verba* of the primitive teacher, especially if an apostle or a personal follower of Jesus. But these records would still be liable to some inaccuracy, from misapprehension or infirmity of memory; and to some discrepancy, from the inevitable variations of language in oral instruction or communication frequently repeated, and that often by different teachers. Each community or church, each intelligent Christian would thus possess a more or less imperfect Gospel, which he would preserve with jealous care, and increase with zealous activity, till it should be superseded by some more regular and complete narrative, the authenticity and authority of which he might be disposed to admit. The evangelists who, like St. Luke, might determine to write in order, either to an individual like Theophilus, to some single church, or to the whole body of Christians, "those things which were most surely believed among them," would naturally have access to, would consult, and avail themselves of many of those private or more public collections. All the three, or any two, might find many coincidences of expression, (if indeed some expressions had not already become conventional and established, or even consecrated forms of language, with regard to certain incidents,) which they would transfer into their own narrative; on the other hand, incidents would be more or less fully developed, or be entirely omitted in some, while retained in others.

Of all points on which discrepancies would be likely to arise, there would be none so variable as the chronological order and consecutive series of events. The primitive teacher, or communicator, of the history of the life and death of Jesus, would often follow a doctrinal rather than an historical connection; and this would, in many instances, be perpetuated by those who should endeavour to preserve in writing that precious information communicated to them by the preacher. Hence the discrepancies and variations in order and arrangement, more especially, as it may be said without irreverence, these rude and simple historians, looking more to religious impression than to historic precision, may have undervalued the importance of rigid chronological narrative. Thus, instead of one or two primary, either received or unauthoritative, sources of the Gospels, I should conceive that there would be many, almost as many as there were Christian communities, all in themselves imperfect, but contributing more or less to the more regular and complete narratives extant in our Gospels. The general necessity, particularly as the apostles and first followers were gradually withdrawn from the scene, would demand a more full and accurate narrative; and these confessedly imperfect collections would fall into disuse, directly that the want was supplied by regular gospels, composed by persons either considered as divinely commissioned, or at least as authoritative and trustworthy writers. The almost universal acceptance of these Gospels is the guarantee for their general conformity with these oral, traditional, and written records of the different communities from which if they had greatly differed, they would probably have been rejected; while the same conformity sufficiently accounts for the greater or less fulness, the variation in the selection of incidents, the silence on some points, or the introduction of others, in one Gospel alone. Whether or not either of the evangelists saw the work of the other, they made constant use of the same or similar sources of information, not merely from the personal knowledge of the evangelists, but likewise from the general oral teaching and oral communications of the apostles and first preachers of Christianity, thus irregularly and incompletely, but honestly and faithfully, registered by the hearers. Under this view, for my own part, I seem rationally to avoid all embarrassment with the difficulties of the subject. I am not surprised at exact coincidences of thought or language, though followed by, or accompanied with, equally remarkable deviations and discrepancies. I perceive why one is brief and the other full; why one omits, while another details, minute circumstances. I can account for much apparent and some real discre-

pancy. I think that I discern, to my own satisfaction, sufficient cause for diversity in the collocation of different incidents : in short, admitting these simple principles, there flows a natural harmony from the whole, which blends and re-unites all the apparent discords which appear to disturb the minds of others.

There is one point which strikes me forcibly in all these minute and elaborate arguments, raised from every word and letter of the Gospels, which prevail throughout the whole of the modern German criticism. It is, that following out their rigid juridical examination, the most extreme rationalists are (unknowningly) influenced by the theory of the strict inspiration of the evangelists. Weisse himself has drawn very ably a distinction between juridical and historical truth, that is, the sort of legal truth which we should require in a court of justice, and that which we may expect from ordinary history. But in his own investigations he appears to me constantly to lose sight of this important distinction ; no cross-examination in an English court of law was ever so severe as that to which every word and shade of expression in the evangelists is submitted. Now this may be just in those who admit a rigid verbal inspiration ; but those who reject it, and consider the evangelists merely as ordinary historians, have no right to require more than ordinary historic accuracy. The evangelists were, either,—

I. Divinely inspired in their language and expressions as well as in the facts and doctrines which they relate. On this theory the inquirer may reasonably endeavour to harmonise discrepancies ; but if he fails, he must submit in devout reverence, and suppose that there is some secret way of reconciling such contradictions, which he wants acuteness or knowledge to comprehend.

II. We may adopt a lower view of inspiration, whether of suggestion or superintendence, or even that which seems to have been generally received in the early ages, the inflexible love of truth, which being inseparable from the spirit of Christianity, would of itself be a sufficient guarantee for fidelity and honesty. Under any of these notions of inspiration (the definition of which word is, in fact, the real difficulty), there would be much latitude for variety of expression, of detail, of chronological arrangement. Each narrative (as the form and the language would be uninspired) would bear marks of the individual character, the local circumstances, the education, the position of the writer.

III. We may consider the evangelists as ordinary historians, credible merely in proportion to their means of obtaining accurate knowledge, their freedom from prejudice, and the abstract credibility of their statements. If, however, so considered (as is invariably the case in the German school of criticism), they should undoubtedly have all the privileges of ordinary historians, and indeed of historians of a singularly rude and inartificial class. They would be liable to all the mistakes into which such writers might fall ; nor would trifling inaccuracies impeach the truth of their general narrative. Take, for instance, the introduction of Cyrenius, in relation to the census in the beginning of St. Luke's Gospel ; in common historical inquiry, it would be concluded that the author had made a mistake (1) as to the name, his general truth would remain unshaken, nor would any one think of building up an hypothesis on so trivial and

(1) Non nos debere arbitrari mentiri quemquam, si pluribus rem quam audierunt vel viderunt reminiscuntibus, non eodem modo atque eisdem verbis, eodem tamen res fuerit indicata : aut sive mutetur ordo verborum, sive alia pro aliis, quæ tamen idem valeant, verba proferantur, sive aliquid vel quod recordanti non occurrat, vel quod ex aliis quæ dicuntur possit intelligi minus dicatur, sive aliorum quæ magis dicere statuit narrandorum gratiâ, ut congruus temporis modus asseuiat, aliquid sibi non totum explicandum, sed ex parte tangendum quisque suscipiat ; sive ad illuminandam declarandamque

sententiam, nihil quidem rerum, verborum tamen aliquid addat, cui auctoritas narrandi concessa est, sive rem bene tenens, non assequatur quævis : id conetur, memoriter etiam verba quæ audivit ad integrum enuntiare. Augustin. De Consens. Evangelist. ii. 28. Compare the whole passage, which coincides with the general view of the fathers as to this question, in c. 50. St. Augustine seems to admit an inspiration of guidance or superintendence. In one passage he seems to go farther, but to plunge (with respect be it spoken) into inextricable nonsense, iii. 30. : see also 48.

natural an inaccuracy. But there is scarcely a work of this school without some such hypothesis. I confess that I am constantly astonished at the elaborate conclusions which are drawn from trifling discrepancies or inaccuracies in those writers, from whom is exacted a precision of language, a minute and unerring knowledge of facts incident to, but by no means forming constituent parts of, their narrative, which is altogether inconsistent with the want of respect in other cases shown to their authority. The Evangelists must have been either entirely inspired, or inspired as to the material parts of their history, or altogether uninspired. In the latter, and indeed in the more moderate view of the second case, they would have a right to the ordinary latitude of honest narrators; they would, we may safely say, be read, as other historians of their inartificial and popular character always are; and so read, it would be impossible, I conceive, not to be surprised and convinced of their authenticity, by their *general* accordance with all the circumstances of their age, country and personal character.

APPENDIX III.

INFLUENCE OF THE MORE IMAGINATIVE INCIDENTS OF THE EARLY EVANGELIC HISTORY ON THE PROPAGATION AND MAINTENANCE OF THE RELIGION.

A CURIOUS fact occurs to those who trace the progress of religious opinion, not merely in the popular theology, but in the works of those, chiefly foreign writers, who indulge in bolder speculations on these subjects. Many of these are men of the profoundest learning, and, it would be the worst insolence of uncharitableness to doubt, with the most sincere and ardent aspirations after truth. The fact is this:—Certain parts of the evangelic history, the angelic appearances, the revelations of the Deity addressed to the senses of man (the *Angelo-phaniai* and *Theophaniai*, as they have been called,)—with some, though not with all this class of writers, every thing miraculous appears totally inconsistent with historic truth. These incidents, being irreconcilable with our actual experience, and rendered suspicious by a multitude of later fictions, which are rejected in the mass by most Protestant Christians, cannot accord with the more subtle and fastidious intelligence of the present times. Some writers go so far as to assert that it is impossible that an inquiring and reasoning age should receive these supernatural facts as historical verities. But if we look back we find that precisely these same parts of the sacred narrative were dearest to the believers of a more imaginative age; and they are still dwelt upon by the general mass of Christians, with that kind of ardent faith, which refuses to break its old alliance with the imagination. It was by this very supernatural agency, if I may so speak, that the doctrines, the sentiments, the moral and religious influence of Christianity, were implanted in the mind, on the first promulgation of the Gospel, and the reverential feeling thus excited, most powerfully contributed to maintain the efficacy of the religion for at least seventeen centuries. That which is now to many incredible, not merely commanded the belief, but made the purely moral and spiritual part of Christianity, to which few of these writers now refuse their assent, credible.

An argument which appears to me of considerable weight arises out of these considerations. Admit, as even the rationalist and mythic interpreters seem to do, though in vague and metaphysical terms, the divine interposition, or at least the pre-arrangement, and effective though remote agency of the Deity, in the introduction of Christianity into the world. These passages in general

are not the vital and essential truths of Christianity, but the vehicle by which these truths were communicated; a kind of language by which opinions were conveyed, and sentiments infused, and the general belief in Christianity implanted, confirmed, and strengthened. As we cannot but suppose that the state of the world, as well during, as subsequent to the introduction of Christianity, the comparative rebarbarisation of the human race, the long centuries in which mankind was governed by imagination, rather than by severe reason, were within the design, or at least the foreknowledge, of all-seeing Providence; so from the fact that this mode of communication with mankind was for so long a period so effective, we may not unreasonably infer its original adoption by Divine Wisdom. This language of poetic incident, and, if I may so speak, of imagery, interwoven as it was with the popular belief, infused into the hymns, the services, the ceremonial of the church, embodied in material representation by painting or sculpture, was the vernacular tongue of Christianity, universally intelligible, and responded to by the human heart, throughout these many centuries. Revelation thus spoke the language, not merely of its own, but of succeeding times; because its design was the perpetuation as well as the first propagation of the Christian religion.

Whether then these were actual appearances or impressions produced on the mind of those who witnessed them, is of slight importance. In either case they are real historical facts; they partake of poetry in their form, and, in a certain sense, in their groundwork, but they are imaginative, not fictitious; true, as relating that which appeared to the minds of the relators exactly as it did appear (1). Poetry, meaning by poetry such an imaginative form, and not merely the form, but the subject-matter of the narrative, as, for instance, in the first chapters of St. Matthew and St. Luke, was the appropriate and perhaps necessary intelligible dialect; the vehicle for the more important truths of the Gospel to later generations. The incidents therefore were so ordered, that they should thus live in the thoughts of men; the revelation itself was so adjusted and arranged in order that it might insure its continued existence throughout this period (2). Could, it may be inquired, a purely, rational or metaphysical creed have survived for any length of time during such stages of human civilisation?

I am aware that this may be considered as carrying out what is called *accommodation* to an unprecedented extent; and that the whole system of what is called accommodation is looked upon with great jealousy. It is supposed to compromise, as it were, the truth of the Deity, or at least of the revelation; a deception, it is said, or at least an illusion, is practised upon the belief of man.

I cannot assent to this view.

From the necessity of the case there must be some departure from the pure and essential spirituality of the Deity, in order to communicate with the human race,—some kind of condescension from the infinite and inconceivable state of Godhead, to become cognisable, or to enter into any kind of relation with material and dimly-mental man. All this is in fact *accommodation*; and the

(1) This, of course, does not apply to facts which must have been either historical events or direct fictions, such as the resurrection of Jesus. The re-appearance of an actual and well known bodily form, cannot be refined into one of those airy and unsubstantial appearances which may be presented to, or may exist solely through, the imaginative faculty. I would strictly maintain this important distinction.

(2) By all those who consider the knowledge of these circumstances to have reached the Evangelists (by whatever notion of inspiration they may be guaranteed) through the ordinary sources of information, from the reminiscences of Ma-

ry herself, or from those of other contemporaries, it would be expected that these remote incidents would be related with the greatest indistinctness, without mutual connection or chronological arrangement, and different incidents be preserved by different Evangelists. This is precisely the case; the very marvellousness of the few circumstances thus preserved accounts in some degree for their preservation, and at the same time for the kind of dimness and poetic character with which they are clothed. They are too slight and wanting in particularity to give the idea of invention: they seem like a few scattered fragments preserved from oral tradition.

adaptation of any appropriate means of addressing, for his benefit, man in any peculiar state of intelligence, is but the wise contrivance, the indispensable condition, which renders that communication either possible, or at least effective to its manifest end. Religion is one great system of accommodation to the wants, to the moral and spiritual advancement, of mankind; and I cannot but think that as it has so efficaciously adapted itself to one state of the human mind, so it will to that mind during all its progress; and it is of all things the most remarkable in Christianity, that it has, as it were, its proper mode of addressing with effect every age and every conceivable state of man. Even if (though I conceive it impossible) the imagination should entirely wither from the human soul, and a severer faith enter into an exclusive alliance with pure reason, Christianity would still have its moral perfection, its rational promise of immortality—its approximation to the one pure, spiritual, incomprehensible Deity, to satisfy that reason, and to infuse those sentiments of dependence, of gratitude, of love to God, without which human society must fall to ruin, and the human mind, in humiliating desperation, suspend all its noble activity, and care not to put forth its sublime and eternal energies.

CHAPTER III.

COMMENCEMENT OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS.

Period to
the as-
sumption
of public
character.

Visit to
Jerusalem.

NEARLY thirty years had passed away, since the birth in Bethlehem, during which period there is but one incident recorded, which could direct the public attention to the Son of Mary (1). All religious Jews made their periodical visits to the capital at the three great festivals, especially at the Passover. The more pious women, though exempt by the law from regular attendance, usually accompanied their husbands or kindred. It is probable that, at the age of twelve, the children, who were then said to have assumed the rank of "Sons of the Law," and were considered responsible for their obedience to the civil and religious institutes of the nation, were first permitted to appear with their parents in the metropolis, to be present, and, as it were, to be initiated in the religious ceremonies (2). Accordingly, at this age, Jesus went up with his parents at the festival to Jerusalem (3); but on their return, after the customary residence of seven days, they had advanced a whole day's journey without discovering that the youth was not to be found in the whole caravan, or long train of pilgrims, which probably comprised almost all the religious inhabitants of the populous northern provinces. In the utmost anxiety they returned to Jerusalem, and, after three days (4), found him in one of the chambers, within the precincts of the temple, set apart for public instruction. In these schools, the wisest and most respected of the rabbis, or teachers, were accustomed to hold their sittings, which were open to all who were desirous of knowledge. Jesus was seated, as the scholars usually were; and at his familiarity with the law, and the depth and subtilty of his questions, the learned men were in the utmost astonishment: the phrase may, perhaps, bear the stronger sense—they were "in an ecstasy of admiration." This incident is strictly in accordance with Jewish usage. The more promising youths were encouraged to the early development and display of their acquaintance with the Sacred Writings, and the institutes of the country. Josephus, the historian, relates, that in his early youth, he was an object of wonder for

(1) There is no likelihood that the extant apocryphal Gospel of the Infancy contains any traditional truth. This work, in my opinion, was evidently composed with a controversial design, to refute the sects which asserted that Jesus was no more than an ordinary child, and that the divine nature descended upon him at his baptism. Hence his childhood is represented as fertile in miracles as his manhood; miracles which are certainly puerile enough for that age. But it is a curious proof of the vitality of popular legends, that many of these stories are still current, even

in England, in our Christmas carols, and in this form are disseminated among our cottages.

(2) Lightfoot. Wetstein, in loc. "A child was free from presenting himself in the temple at the three feasts, until (according to the school of Hillel) he was able, his father taking him by the hand, to go up with him into the mount of the temple." Lightfoot, x. 71.

(3) Luke, ii. 41. 52.

(4) According to Grotius, they had advanced one day's journey towards Galilee, returned the second, and found him the third: in loc.

his precocious knowledge, with the Wise Men, who took delight in examining and developing his proficiency in the subtler questions of the law. Whether the impression of the transcendent promise of Jesus was as deep and lasting as it was vivid, we have no information; for without reluctance, with no more than a brief and mysterious intimation that public instruction was the business imposed upon him by his Father, he returned with his parents to his remote and undistinguished home. The Law, in this, as in all such cases, harmonising with the eternal instincts of nature, had placed the relation of child and parent on the simplest and soundest principles. The authority of the parent was unlimited, while his power of inflicting punishment on the person, or injuring the fortunes of the child by disinheritance, was controlled; and while the child, on the one hand, was bound to obedience by the strongest sanctions, on the other the duty of maintaining and instructing his offspring was as rigidly enforced upon the father. The youth then returned to the usual subjection to his parents; and, for nearly eighteen years longer, we have no knowledge that Jesus was distinguished among the inhabitants of Nazareth, except by his exemplary piety, and by his engaging demeanour and conduct, which acquired him the general good-will. The law, as some suppose, prescribed the period of thirty years for the assumption of the most important functions; and it was not till he had arrived at this age, that Jesus again emerged from his obscurity (1); nor does it appear improbable that John had previously commenced his public career at the same period in his life.

During these thirty years, most important revolutions had taken place in the public administration of affairs in Judæa; and a deep and sullen change had been slowly working in the popular mind. The stirring events which had rapidly succeeded each other, were such as no doubt might entirely obliterate any transient impressions made by the marvellous circumstances which attended the birth of Jesus, if indeed they had obtained greater publicity than we are inclined to suppose. As the period approach, in which the new Teacher was to publish his mild and benignant faith, the nation, wounded in their pride, galled by oppression, infuriated by the promulgation of fierce and turbulent doctrines more congenial to their temper, became less and less fit to receive any but a warlike and conquering Messiah. The reign of Archelaus, or rather the interregnum, while he awaited the ratification of his kingly powers from Rome, had commenced with a bloody tumult, in which the royal soldiery had attempted to repress the insurrectionary spirit of the populace. The passover had been interrupted— an unpre-

Political
Revolutions dur-
ing the
preceding
period.

Reign of
Archelaus.

(1) Or entering on his thirtieth year. According to the Jewish mode of computation, the year, the week, or the day which had commenced was included in the calculation. Lightfoot.

Reduction
to a Ro-
man pro-
vince.

Sanhe-
drin.

The pub-
licans

Insurrec-
tions.

cedented and ill-omened event! and the nation, assembled from all quarters, had been constrained to disperse without the completion of the sacred ceremony (1). After the tyrannical reign of Archelaus as ethnarch, for more than nine years, he had been banished into Gaul, and Judæa was reduced to a Roman province, under a governor (procurator) of the equestrian order, who was subordinate to the President of Syria. But the first Roman governors, having taken up their residence in Herod's magnificent city on the coast, Cæsarea, the municipal government of Jerusalem had apparently fallen into the hands of the native authorities. The Sanhedrin of seventy-one, composed of the chief priests and men learned in the law, from a court of judicature, to which their functions were chiefly confined, while the executive was administered by the kings, had become a kind of senate. Pontius Pilate, the first of the Roman governors, who, if he did not afflict the capital with the spectacle of a resident foreign ruler, seems to have visited it more frequently, was the first who introduced into the city the "idolatrous" standards of Rome, and had attempted to suspend certain bucklers, bearing an image of the emperor, in the palace of Herod (2). In his time, the Sanhedrin seems to have been recognised as a sort of representative council of the nation. But the proud and unruly people could not disguise from itself the humiliating consciousness, that it was reduced to a state of foreign servitude. Throughout the country the publicans, the farmers or collectors of the tribute to Rome, a burden not less vexatious in its amount (3) and mode of collection, than offensive to their feelings, were openly exercising their office. The chief priest was perpetually displaced at the order of the Roman prefect, by what might be jealous or systematic policy, but which had all the appearance of capricious and insulting violence (4). They looked abroad, but without hope. The country had, without any advantage, suffered all the evils of insurrectionary anarchy. At the period between the death of Herod and the accession of his sons, adventurers of all classes had taken up arms, and some of the lowest, shepherds and slaves, whether hoping to strike in with the popular feeling, and if successful at first, to throw the whole nation on their side, had not scrupled to assume the title and ensigns of royalty. These commotions had been suppressed; but the external appearance of peace was but a fallacious evidence of the real state of public feeling. The religious sects which had long divided the nation, those of the Pharisees and Sadducees, no longer restrained by the strong hand of power, renewed their conflicts: sometimes one party, sometimes the other, ob-

(1) Hist. of the Jews, ii. 132.

(2) Hist. of the Jews, ii. 156.

(3) About this period Syria and Judæa petitioned for a remission of tribute, which was de-

scribed as intolerably oppressive. Tac. Ann. ii. 42.

(4) There were twenty-eight, says Josephus, from the time of Herod to the burning of the temple by Titus. Ant. xx. 8.

tained the high priesthood, and predominated in the Sanhedrin; while from the former had sprung up a new faction, in whose tenets the stern sense of national degradation which rankled in the hearts of so many, found vent and expression.

The sect of Judas the Gaulonite, or as he was called, the Galilean, ^{Judas the Galilean.} may be considered the lineal inheritors of that mingled spirit of national independence and of religious enthusiasm, which had in early days won the glorious triumph of freedom from the Syro-Grecian kings, and had maintained a stern though secret resistance to the later Asmoneans, and to the Idumean dynasty. Just before the death of Herod, it had induced the six thousand Pharisees to refuse the oath of allegiance to the king and to his imperial protector, and had probably been the secret incitement in the other acts of resistance to the royal authority. Judas, the Galilean, openly proclaimed the unlawfulness, the impiety of God's people submitting to a foreign yoke, and thus acknowledging the subordination of the Jewish theocracy to the empire of Rome. The payment of tribute which began to be enforced on the deposition of Archelaus, according to his tenets, was not merely a base renunciation of their liberties, but a sin against their God. To the doctrines of this bold and eloquent man, which had been propagated with dangerous rapidity and success, frequent allusions are found in the Gospels. Though the Galileans, slain by Pilate, may not have been of this sect, yet probably the Roman authorities would look with more than usual jealousy on any appearance of tumult arising in the province, which was the reputed birthplace of Judas; and the constant attempts to implicate Jesus with this party appear in their insidious questions about the lawfulness of paying tribute to Cæsar. The subsequent excesses of the Zealots, who were the doctrinal descendants of Judas, and among whom his own sons assumed a dangerous and fatal preeminence, may show that the jealousy of the rulers was not groundless; and indicate, as will hereafter appear, under what unfavourable impressions with the existing authorities, on account of his coming from Galilee, Jesus was about to enter on his public career.

Towards the close of this period of thirty years, though we have ^{John the Baptist.} no evidence to fix a precise date, while Jesus was growing up in the ordinary course of nature, in the obscurity of the Galilean town of Nazareth, which lay to the north of Jerusalem, at much the same distance to the south John had arrived at maturity, and suddenly appeared as a public teacher, at first in the desert country in the neighbourhood of Hebron; but speedily removed, no doubt for the facility of administering the characteristic rite, from which he was called the Baptist, at all seasons, and with the utmost publicity and effect (1). In the southern desert of Judæa the streams are few and

(1) Matt. iii. 1—12. Mark. i. 2—8. Luke. iii. 1—18.

scanty, probably in the summer entirely dried up. The nearest large body of water was the Dead Sea. Besides that the western banks of this great lake are mostly rugged and precipitous, natural feeling, and still more the religious awe of the people, would have shrunk from performing sacred ablutions in those fetid, unwholesome, and accursed waters (1). But the banks of the great national stream, the scene of so many miracles, offered many situations, in every respect admirably calculated for this purpose. The Baptist's usual station was near the place, Bethabara, the ford of the Jordan, which tradition pointed out as that where the waters divided before the ark, that the chosen people might enter into the promised land. Here, though the adjacent region towards Jerusalem is wild and desert, the immediate shores of the river offer spots of great picturesque beauty. The Jordan has a kind of double channel. In its summer course, the shelving banks, to the top of which the waters reach at its period of flood, are covered with acacias and other trees of great luxuriance; and amid the rich vegetation and grateful shade afforded by these scenes, the Italian painters, with no less truth than effect, have delighted to represent the Baptist surrounded by listening multitudes, or performing the solemn rite of initiation. The teacher himself partook of the ascetic character of the more solitary of the Essenes, all of whom retired from the tumult and license of the city, some dwelt alone in remote hermitages, and not rarely pretended to a prophetic character. His raiment was of the coarsest texture, of camel's hair; his girdle (an ornament often of the greatest richness in Oriental costume, of the finest linen or cotton, and embroidered with silver or gold,) was of untanned leather; his food the locusts (2), and wild honey, of which there is a copious supply both in the open and the wooded regions, in which he had taken up his abode.

Baptism.

No question has been more strenuously debated than the origin of the rite of baptism. The practice of the external washing of the body, as emblematic of the inward purification of the soul, is almost universal. The sacred Ganges cleanses all moral pollution from the Indian; among the Greeks and Romans even the murderer might, it was supposed, wash the blood "clean from his hands (3);" and in many of their religious rites, lustrations or oblations, either in the running stream or in the sea, purified the candidate for divine favour, and made him fit to approach the shrines of the gods. The perpetual similitude and connection between the uncleanness of the body and of the soul, which ran through the

(1) The Aulon, or Valley of the Jordan, is mostly desert. Διατίμνει τὴν Γενήσαρ μίσην ἔπειτα πολλὴν ἀναμετρούμενος ἡρμῖαν εἰς τὴν Ἀσφαλτίτιν ἔξεισι λίμνην. Joseph. B. T. iii. 10. 7.

(2) That locusts are no uncommon food is so

well known from all travellers in the East, that it is unnecessary to quote any single authority. There is a kind of bean, called in that country the locust bean, which some have endeavoured to make out to have been the food of John.

(3) Ah nimium faciles, qui tristia crimina cæcis Tolli fluminea posse putatis aqua. Ovid

Mosaic law, and had become completely interwoven with the common language and sentiment, the formal enactment of ablutions in many cases, which either required the cleansing of some unhealthy taint, or more than usual purity, must have familiarised the mind with the mysterious effects attributed to such a rite : and of all the Jewish sects, that of the Essenes, to which no doubt popular opinion associated the Baptist, were most frequent and scrupulous in their ceremonial ablutions. It is strongly asserted on the one hand, and denied with equal confidence on the other, that baptism was in general use among the Jews as a distinct and formal rite ; and that it was by this ceremony that the Gentile proselytes, who were not yet thought worthy of circumcision, or perhaps refused to submit to it, were imperfectly initiated into the family of Israel (1). Though there does not seem very conclusive evidence in the earlier rabbinical writings to the antiquity, yet there are perpetual allusions to the existence of this rite, at least at a later period ; and the argument, that after irreconcilable hostility had been declared between the two religions, the Jews would be little likely to borrow their distinctive ceremony from the Christians, applies with more than ordinary force. Nor, if we may fairly judge from the very rapid and concise narrative of the Evangelists, does the public administration of baptism by John appear to have excited astonishment as a new and unprecedented rite.

For, from every quarter, all ranks and sects crowded to the teaching and to partake in the mystic ablutions performed by the Baptist. The stream of the Jordan reflected the wondering multitudes of every class and character, which thronged around him with that deep interest and high-wrought curiosity, which could not fail to be excited, especially at such a crisis, by one who assumed the tone and authority of a divine commission, and seemed, even if he were not hereafter to break forth in a higher character, to renew in his person the long silent and interrupted race of the ancient prophets. Of all those prophets Elijah was held in the most profound reverence by the descendants of Israel (2). He was the representative of their great race of moral instructors and interpreters of the Divine Will, whose writings (though of Elijah nothing remained) had been admitted to almost equal authority with the law itself, were

Multitudes who attend his preaching.

(1) Lightfoot, *Harmony of Evang.* iii. 38. iv. 407, etc. Danzius, in Meuschen, *Talmudica*, etc. Schoetgen and Wetstein, in loc.

(2) Some of the strange notions about Elias may be found in Lightfoot, *Harm. of Evang.* iv. 399. Compare *Ecclesiast.* xlviii. 10, 11. "Elias, who is written of for reproofs in these times, to appease the anger of him that is ready for wrath (or before wrath, *πρὸ θυμοῦ*, or *πρὸ θυμοῦ*), to turn the heart of the father to the son, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. Blessed are they that see thee, and are adorned with love ; for we too shall live the life." In the English translation the traditional allusion is obscured. "In that day,

when the Lord shall deliver Israel, three days before the coming of the Messiah, Elias shall come, and shall stand on the mountains of Israel mourning and wailing concerning them, and saying, How long will ye stay in the dry and wasted land ? And his voice shall be heard from one end of the world to the other ; and after that he shall say unto them, "Peace cometh to the world, as it is written (*Isaiah*, lii. 7.), How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace." *Jalkut Schamuni*, fol. 53. c. 6. Quoted in Bertholdi. See other quotations. Schoetgen, *Hor. Heb.* ii. 533, 534. Justin, *Dial. cum Tryph.*

read in the public synagogues, and with the other sacred books formed the canon of their Scripture. A mysterious intimation had closed this hallowed volume of the prophetic writings, announcing, as from the lips of Malachi, on which the fire of prophecy expired, a second coming of Elijah, which it should seem popular belief had construed into the personal re-appearance of him who had ascended into heaven in a car of fire. And where, and at what time, and in what form was he so likely to appear, as in the desert, by the shore of the Jordan, at so fearful a crisis in the national destinies, and in the wild garb and with the mortified demeanour so frequent among the ancient seers? The language of the Baptist took the bold, severe, and uncompromising tone of those delegates of the Most High. On both the great religious factions he denounced the same maledictions, from both demanded the same complete and immediate reformation. On the people he inculcated mutual charity; on the publicans, whom he did not exclude from his followers, justice; on the soldiery (1) humanity, and abstinence from all unnecessary violence and pillage. These general denunciations against the vices of the age, and the indiscriminate enforcement of a higher moral and religious standard, though they might gall the consciences of individuals, or wound the pride of the different sects; yet, as clashing with no national prejudice, would excite no hostility, which could be openly avowed; while the fearless and impartial language of condemnation was certain to secure the wonder, the respect, the veneration, of the populace.

Expecta-
tion of the
Messiah.

But that which no doubt drew the whole population in such crowds to the desert shores of the Jordan, was the mysterious yet distinct assertion, that the "kingdom of Heaven was at hand (2)" —that kingdom of which the belief was as universal as of the personal coming of the Messiah; and as variously coloured by the disposition and temperament of every class and individual, as the character of the sovereign, who was thus to assume dominion. All anticipated the establishment of an earthly sovereignty, but its approach thrilled the popular bosom with mingled emotions. The very prophecy which announced the previous appearance of Elijah, spoke of the "great and dreadful day of the Lord," and, as has been said, according to the current belief, fearful calamities were to precede the glorious days of the Messiah: nor was it till after a dark

(1) Michaelis has very ingeniously observed, that these men are described not merely as soldiers (*σπαρταῖται*), but as on actual service (*σπαρτινομίνοι*); and has conjectured that they were part of the forces of Herod Antipas, who was at this time at war, or preparing for war, with Aretas, king of Arabia. Their line of march would lead them to the ford of the Jordan.

(2) This phrase is discussed by Kuinoel, vol. i. page 73. According to its Jewish meaning, it

was equivalent to the kingdom of the Messiah (the kingdom of God, or of Heaven), Schoetgen, *Hor. Hebr.* p. 1147., which was to commence and endure for ever, when the law was to be fully restored, and the immutable theocracy of God's chosen people re-established for eternity. In its higher Christian sense it assumed the sense of the moral dominion to be exercised by Christ over his subjects in this life; that dominion which is to be continued over his faithful in the state of immortal existence beyond the grave.

period of trial, that the children of Abraham, as the prerogative of their birth, the sons of God (1), the inheritors of his kingdom, were to emerge from their obscurity; their theocracy to be re-established in its new and more enduring form; the dead, at least those who were to share in the first resurrection, their own ancestors, were to rise; the solemn judgment was to be held; the hostile nations were to be thrust down to hell; and those only of the Gentiles, who should become proselytes to Judaism, were to be admitted to this earthly paradisiacal state (2).

The language of the Baptist at once fell in with and opposed the popular feeling; at one instant it raised, at the next it crossed their hopes. He announced the necessity of a complete moral change, while he repudiated the claims of those who rested their sole title to the favours of God on their descent from the chosen race, for "God even of the stones could raise up children to Abraham." But, on the other hand, he proclaimed the immediate, the instant coming of the Messiah; and on the nature of the kingdom, though he might deviate from the ordinary language, in expressly intimating that the final separation would be made not on national but moral grounds—that the bad and good, even of the race of Israel, were to be doomed according to their wickedness or virtue—yet there was nothing which interfered with the prevailing belief in the personal temporal reign of the Son of David.

Mysterious
language
of the Bap-
tist.

The course of our history will show how slowly Christianity attained the purely moral and spiritual notion of the change to be wrought by the coming of Christ, and how perpetually this inveterate Judaism has revived in the Christian Church, where, in days of excitement, the old Jewish tenet of the personal reign of the

(1) Compare Justin Martyr, Dial. 433. ed. Thirlby. Grotius on Matt. x. 28 xiv. 2. James, ii. 14. Whitty on Acts, i. 23. Jortin's Discourses, page 26.

(2) See Wetstein, in loc. The following passage closely resembles the language of John: "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." Matt. iii. 12. The Jer. Talmud adduces Isaiah, xvi. 12. "The morning cometh and also the night; it shall be morning to Israel, but night to the nations of the world." (Ta'anith, fol. 64. 1.) "The threshing is come: the straw they cast into the fire, the chaff unto the wind, but preserve the wheat in the floor, and every one that sees it, takes it and kisses it. So the nations of the world say, The world was made for our sakes: But Israel say to them, Is it not written, But the people shall be as the burning of the time-kiln, but Israel in the time to come (*i. e.* the time of the Messiah) shall be left only; as it is said, The Lord shall be with him alone, and there shall be no strange God." Mid. Tell, on Psalm ii. Lightfoot, iii. 47.

Some of these and similar expressions may belong to the period of the obstinate, we may surely add, the patriotic struggle of the Jews against the tyranny of Rome, after what Tacitus terms

their "hatred of the human race," had been embittered by years of contempt and persecution; and while, in Gibbon's language, "their dreams of prophecy and conquest" were kept alive by the bold resistance to Titus, and the successes of Bar-cochab under Hadrian, But there can be little doubt, that pride had already drawn these distinctions between themselves and the rest of mankind, which were deepened by the sense of persecution, and cherished as the only consolation of degradation and despair.

Le Judaïsme est un système de misanthropie, qui en veut à tous les peuples de la terre sans aucune exception. "Il n'étend l'amour du prochain qu'aux seuls Juifs, tandis que la Mosaïsme l'étend à tous les hommes, sans aucune distinction (*vide note*). Il commande en outre qu'on envisage tous les autres peuples de la terre, comme dignes de haine et de mépris, pour la seule raison qu'ils n'ont pas été, ou qu'ils ne sont pas Juifs. Chaurini, Preface to Translation of Talmud, p. 55.

Passages of the Talmud will certainly bear out this harsh conclusion; but I think better of human nature, than to suppose that this sentiment was not constantly counteracted by the humane feelings to which affliction would subdue hearts of better mould, or which would be infused by the gentler spirit of the genuine religion of Moses.

Messiah has filled the mind of the enthusiast. Nor were the Jews likely to be more embarrassed than mankind in general by the demand of high moral qualifications; for while one part would look on their own state with perfect complacency and satisfaction, another would expect to obtain from Heaven, without much effort or exertion on their own part, that which Heaven required. God who intended to make them happy would first make them virtuous.

Deputation of the priesthood concerning the pretensions of John.

Such was the general excitement at the appearance, the teaching, and the baptizing of John. So great was the influence which he had obtained throughout the country, that, as we shall speedily see, a formal deputation from the national authorities was commissioned to inquire into his pretensions, and to ascertain whether he limited himself to those of a prophet, or laid claim to the higher title of "the Christ." And the deep hold which he had taken upon the popular feeling is strongly indicated by the fact, that the rulers did not dare, on the occasion of a question proposed to them at a much later period, by Jesus, openly to deny the prophetic mission of John, which was not merely generally acknowledged, but even zealously asserted by the people.

How long the preaching of John had lasted before the descent of the Son of Mary to the shores of the Jordan, rests on somewhat uncertain evidence (1). We can decide with as little confidence on some other more interesting questions. There is no precise information, whether any or what degree of intercourse had been kept up between the family of Zachariah and that of Joseph, who resided at a considerable distance from each other, and were not likely to meet, unless at the periodical feasts; nor how far John might be previously acquainted with the person of Jesus (2). But it is undoubtedly a remarkable fact in the history of Christianity, that from the very first appearance of Jesus on the shores of the Jordan, unquestionably before he had displayed his powers, or openly asserted his title to the higher place, John should invariably retain his humbler relative position. Such was his uniform language from the commencement of his career; such it continued to the end. Yet at this period the power and influence of John over the public mind were at their height; Jesus, humanly speaking, was but an unknown and undistinguished youth, whose qualifications to maintain the higher character were as yet untried. John, however, cedes at once the

Avowed inferiority of John to Jesus.

(1) Matt. iii. 13—17. Mark, i. 9. 14. Luke, iii. 21. 23. John, i. 15. 18.

(2) The discrepancies between the different evangelists as to the language of John, on several occasions, with regard to Jesus, appear to me characteristic of the dim and awe-struck state of the general mind, which would extend to the remembrance and the faithful record of such incidents. It is assumed, I think without warrant, that John himself must have had a distinct or definite notion of the Messiahship of Jesus: he may have applied some of the prophetic or po-

pular sayings supposed to have reference to the Messiah, without any precise notion of their meaning; and his conception of the Messiah's character, and of Jesus himself, may have varied during different passages of his own life. If the whole had been more distinct and systematic, it would be more liable, according to my judgment, to suspicion. The account of John in Josephus is just as his character would be likely to appear to a writer in his character and situation.

first place : in the strongest language (1) he declares himself immeasurably inferior to him, who stood among the crowd, unmarked and unregarded ; whatever his own claims, whatever the effects of his initiatory rite, Jesus was at once to assume a higher function, to administer a more powerful and influential baptism (2). This has always appeared to me one of the most striking incidental arguments for the truth of the Evangelic narrative, and consequently of the Christian faith. The recognition appears to have been instant and immediate. Hitherto, the Baptist had insisted on the purification of all who had assembled around him ; and, with the commanding dignity of a Heaven-commissioned teacher, had rebuked, without distinction, the sins of all classes and all sects. In Jesus alone, by his refusal to baptize him, he acknowledges the immaculate purity, while his deference assumes the tone of homage, almost of adoration (3).

Jesus, however, perhaps to do honour to a rite, which was hereafter to be that of initiation into the new religion, insists on submitting to the usual ablution. As he went up out of the water, which wound below in its deep channel, and was ascending the shelving shore, a light shone around with the rapid and undulating motion of a dove, typifying the descent of the Holy Spirit on the Son of Man ; and a voice was heard from Heaven, which recognised him as the Son of God, well pleasing to the Almighty Father of the Universe. This light could scarcely have been seen, or the voice heard, by more than the Baptist and the Son of Mary himself (4), as no immediate sensation appears to have been excited among the multitudes, such as must have followed this public and miraculous proclamation of his sacred character ; and at a subsequent period, Jesus seems to have appeared among the followers of John, unrecognised, or at least unhonoured, until he was pointed out by the Baptist, and announced as having been proclaimed from Heaven at his baptism. The calmness and comparatively unimposing peacefulness of this

Baptism of
Jesus

(1) The remarkable expression, "whosoever I am not able to unloose," is illustrated by a passage in the Talmud. (Tract. Kidduschin, xxii. 2.) "Every office a servant will do for his master, a scholar should perform for his teacher, excepting loosening his sandal thong."

(2) Strauss (i. 396.) argues that this concession of the higher place by the ascetic John (and asceticism, he justly observes, is the most stern and unyielding principle in the human character) is so contrary to the principles of human nature, and to all historical precedent, that the whole must be fictitious ; a singular canon, that every thing extraordinary and unprecedented in history must be untrue. I suspect the common phrase, "truth is strange—stranger than fiction," to be founded on deeper knowledge of human nature, and of the events of the world.

(3) The more distinct declarations of inferiority contained in several passages are supposed by most harmonists of the Gospels to have been made after the baptism of Jesus.

(4) This appears from John, i. 32. *Neander* (Leben Jesu, p. 69.) represents it as a symbolic vision.

It may be well to observe, that this explanation of voices from heaven, as a mental perception, not as real articulate sounds but as inward impressions, is by no means modern, or what passes under the unpopular name of rationalism. There is a very full and remarkable passage in Origen *cont. Celsus*, i. 48., on this point. He is speaking of the offence which may be given to the simple, who from their great simplicity are ready on every occasion to shake the world, and cleave the compact firmament of heaven. *Κάν προσκοπτῇ τὸ τοιοῦτον τοῖς ἀπλουτέροις, ἢ διὰ πολλὴν ἀπλότητα κινεῖται τὸν κόσμον, σχίζοντες τὸ τηλικούτον σῶμα ἡνωμένον τοῦ πάντος οὐρανοῦ.* See likewise in *Suicer's Thesaur. voc. Φώνη*, the passages from St. Basil and Gregory of Nyssa.

scene, which may be described as the inauguration of this "greater than Moses," in his office as founder of a new religion, is strikingly contrasted with the terrific tempests and convulsions of nature, at the delivery of the law on Sinai, and harmonises with the general tone and character of the new faith. The image of the Dove, the universal symbol of innocence and peace (1), even if purely illustrative, is beautifully in keeping with the gentler character of the whole transaction.

Temptation of Jesus.

The Temptation of Jesus is the next event in the history of his life (2), and here, at the opening, as it were, of his career, appears shadowed out the sort of complex character under which Christianity represents its Divine Author, as a kind of federal representative of mankind. On the interpretation of no incident in the Gospels, do those who insist on the literal acceptance of the Evangelists' language, and those who consider that, even in the New Testament much allowance is to be made for the essentially allegoric character of Oriental narrative, depart so far asunder (3). While the former receive the whole as a real scene, the latter suppose that the truth lies deeper; and that some, not less real, though less preternatural transaction, is related, either from some secret motive, or, according to the genius of Eastern narrative, in this figurative style. As pretending to discover historical facts of much importance in the life of Christ, the latter exposition demands our examination. The Temptation, according to one view, is a parabolic description of an actual event (4); according to another, of a kind of inward mental trial, which continued during the public career of Jesus. In the first theory, the Tempter was nothing less than the high priest, or one of the Sanhedrin, delegated by their authority to discover the real pretensions of Jesus. Having received intelligence of the testimony borne to Jesus by John, this person was directed to follow him into the wilderness, where he first demanded, as the price of his acknowledgment by the public authorities, some display of miraculous power, such as should enable him, like Moses, to support the life of man by a preternatural supply of food in the wilderness. He then held out to him the splendid prospects of aggrandisement, if he should boldly place himself, as a divinely commissioned leader, at the head of the nation; and even led him in person to the pinnacle of the temple, and commanded him to cast himself down, as

(1) Ennius apud Cic. de Div. i. 48. Tibull. i. 8, 9.

(2) Matt. iv. 1. 11. Mark, iv. 12, 13. Luke, iv. 1—13.

(3) Some of the older writers, as Theodore of Mopsuestia, explained it as a vision: to this notion Le Clerc inclines. Schleiermacher treats it as a parable, p. 58. Those who are most scrupulous in departing from the literal sense, cannot but be embarrassed with this kind of personal conflict with a Being whom the devil must have

known, according to their own view, to have been divine. This is one of those points which will be differently understood, according to the turn and cast of mind of different individuals. I would therefore deprecate the making either interpretation an article of faith, or deciding with dogmatic certainty on so perplexing a passage.

(4) This theory, differently modified, is embraced by Herman Vonder Hardt, by the elder Rosenmüller (Schol. in loc.), and by Kuinoel.

the condition, if he should be miraculously preserved, of his formal recognition by the Sanhedrin. To this view, ingenious as it is, some obvious objections occur;—the precise date apparently assigned to the transaction by the Evangelists, and the improbability that, at so early a period, he would be thought of so much importance by the ruling powers; the difficulty of supposing that, even if there might be prudential motives to induce St. Matthew, writing in Judæa, to disguise, under this allegoric veil, so remarkable an event in the history of Christ, St. Luke, influenced by no such motives, would adopt the same course. Though, indeed, it may be replied, that if the transaction had once assumed, it would be likely to retain, its parabolic dress; still, it must seem extraordinary that no clearer notice of so extraordinary a circumstance should transpire in any of the Christian records. Nor does it appear easily reconcileable with the cautious distance at which the authorities appear to have watched the conduct of Jesus, thus, as it were, at once to have committed themselves, and almost placed themselves within his power.

The second theory is embarrassed with fewer of these difficulties, though it is liable to the same objection, as to the precise date apparently assigned to the incident. According to this view, at one particular period of his life, or at several times, the earthly and temporal thoughts, thus parabolically described as a personal contest with the Principle of Evil, passed through the mind of Jesus, and arrayed before him the image constantly present to the minds of his countrymen, that of the author of a new temporal theocracy. For so completely were the suggestions in unison with the popular expectation, that ambition, if it had taken a human or a worldly turn, might have urged precisely such displays of supernatural power as are represented in the temptations of Jesus. On no two points, probably, would the Jews have so entirely coincided, as in expecting the Messiah to assume his title and dignity, before the view of the whole people, and in the most public and imposing manner; such for instance, as, springing from the highest point of the temple, to have appeared floating in the air, or preternaturally poised upon the unyielding element; any miraculous act, in short, of a totally opposite character to those more private, more humane, and, if we may so speak, more unassuming signs, to which he himself appealed as the evidences of his mission. To be the lord of all the kingdoms, at least of Palestine, if not of the whole world, was according to the same popular belief, the admitted right of the Messiah. If then, as the history implies, the Saviour was tried by the intrusion of worldly thoughts, whether according to the common literal interpretation, actually urged by the Principle of Evil, in his proper person, or, according to this more modified interpretation of the passage, suggested to his mind, such was the natural turn which they might have taken.

But, however interpreted, the moral purport of the scene remains the same—the intimation that the strongest and most lively impressions were made upon the mind of Jesus, to withdraw him from the purely religious end of his being upon earth, to transform him from the author of a moral revolution to be slowly wrought by the introduction of new principles of virtue, and new rules for individual and social happiness, to the vulgar station of one of the great monarchs or conquerors of mankind; to degrade him from a being who was to offer to man the gift of eternal life, and elevate his nature to a previous fitness for that exalted destiny, to one whose influence over his own generation might have been more instantaneously manifest, but which could have been as little permanently beneficial as that of any other of those remarkable names, which, especially in the East, have blazed for a time and expired.

From the desert, not improbably supposed to be that of Quarantania, lying between Jericho and Jerusalem, where tradition, in Palestine unfortunately of no great authority, still points out the scene of this great spiritual conflict, and where a mountain (1), commanding an almost boundless prospect of the valleys and hills of Judæa, is shown as that from whence Jesus looked down unmoved on the kingdoms of the earth, the Son of Man returned to the scene of John's baptism.

Deputation from Jerusalem to John.

In the mean time the success of the new prophet, the Baptist, had excited the attention, if not the jealousy, of the ruling authorities of the Jews. The solemn deputation appeared to inquire into his pretensions. The Pharisees probably at this time predominated in the great council, and the delegates, as of this sect, framed their questions in accordance with the popular traditions, as well as with the prophetic writings (2): they inquire whether he is the Christ, or Elias, or *the prophet* (3). John at once disclaims his title to the appellation of the Christ; nor is he Elijah, personally returned, according to the vulgar expectation (4); nor Jeremiah, to whom tradition assigned the name of "the prophet," who was to rise from the dead at the coming of the Messiah, in order, it was supposed, to restore the tabernacle, the ark, and the altar of incense, which he was said to have concealed in a cave on the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, and which were to be brought again to light at the Messiah's coming (5).

The next day John renewed his declaration that he was the harbinger (6), described in the prophet Isaiah, who, according to the custom in the progresses of Oriental monarchs, was to go before,

(1) The best description of this mountain is in the Travels of the Abbé Mariti.

(2) The Sanhedrin alone could judge a tribe, the high priest, or a prophet. (Sanhedrin Paroch. i.) Hence "a prophet could not perish

out of Jerusalem." Luke, xiii. 33. Lightfoot. Harna. Ev.

(3) John, i. 19—28.

(4) Wetstein. Nov. Test. in loc.

(5) 2 Macc. ii. 4—8. xv. 14.

(6) John, i. 29. 34.

and cutting through mountains and bridging valleys, to make a wide and level way for the advance of the Great King. So John was to remove some of the moral impediments for the reception of Christ. At the same time, as Jesus mingled undistinguished among the crowd, without directly designating him, he declared the actual presence of the mightier teacher who was about to appear. The next day, in the more private circle of his believers, John did not scruple to point out more distinctly the person of the Messiah (1). The occasion of his remarkable speech (it has been suggested with much probability) was the passing of large flocks of sheep and lambs, which, from the rich pastoral districts beyond the river, crossed the Jordan at the ford, and were driven on to the metropolis, to furnish either the usual daily sacrifices or those for the approaching passover. The Baptist, as they were passing, glanced from them to Jesus, declared him to be that superior Being, of whom he was but the humble harbinger, and described him as "the Lamb of God (2), which taketh away the sins of the world." Unblemished and innocent as the meek animals that passed, like them he was to go up as a sacrifice to Jerusalem, and in some mysterious manner to "take away" the sins of mankind. Another title, by which he designated Jesus yet more distinctly as the Messiah, was that of the "Son of God," one of the appellations of the Deliverer most universally admitted, though, no doubt, it might bear a different sense to different hearers.

Jesus designated by John as the Messiah.

Among the more immediate disciples of John this declaration of their master could not but excite the strongest emotions; nor can anything be more characteristic of the feelings of that class among the Jews than the anxious rapidity with which the wonderful intelligence is propagated, and the distant and awe-struck reverence with which the disciples slowly present themselves to their new master. The first of these were, Andrew, the brother of Simon (Peter), and probably the author of the narrative, St. John (3). Simon, to whom his brother communicates the extraordinary

First disciples of Jesus.

(1) John, i. 35, 36.

(2) Supposing (as is the general opinion) that this term refers to the expiatory sacrifice of Christ, according to the analogy between the death of Jesus and the sacrificial victims, subsequently developed by the apostles (and certainly the narrower sense maintained by Grotius, and the modern learned writers (see Rosenmüller and Kuinoel in loc.) are by no means satisfactory), to the hearers of John at this time such an allusion must have been as unintelligible as the intimations of Jesus about his future sufferings to his disciples. Indeed, if understood by John himself in its full sense, it is difficult to reconcile it with the more imperfect views of the Messiah, evinced by his doubt during his imprisonment. To the Jews in general it can have conveyed no distinct meaning. That the Messiah was to be blameless, was strictly accordant with their notions, and "his taking away sins," bore an intelligible Jewish sense, but taking them away by

his own sacrifice, was a purely Christian tenet, and but obscurely and prophetically alluded to before the death of Christ. How far the Jews had any notion of a suffering Messiah (afterwards their great stumbling-block) is a most obscure question. The Chaldaic paraphrast certainly refers, but in very vague and contradictory language (Isaiah, lii, 13. et seq.), to the Messiah. See on one side Schoetgen, *Hor.* Heb. ii. 181. and Damascius, de *Δύτρω*, in Meuschen; on the other, Rosenmüller and Gesenius on *Isaiah*. The notion of the double Messiah, the suffering Messiah the son of Joseph, and the triumphant, the son of David (as in Pearson on the Creed, vol. ii.), is of most uncertain date and origin; but nothing, in my opinion, can be more incredible than that it should have been derived, as Bertholdt would imagine, from the Samaritan belief. Bertholdt, c. 29.

(3) John, i. 37-42.

tidings, immediately follows, and on him Jesus bestows a new name, expressive of the firmness of his character. All these belonged to the same village, Bethsaida, on the shore of the lake of Gennesareth. On the departure of Jesus, when he is returning to Galilee, he summons another, named Philip. Philip, like Andrew, hastens away to impart the tidings to Nathanael, not improbably conjectured to be the apostle Bartholomew (the son of Tolmai or Ptolemy), a man of blameless character, whose only doubt is, that the Messiah should come from a town of such proverbial disrepute as Nazareth (1). But the doubts of Nathanael are removed by the preternatural knowledge displayed by Jesus of an incident which he could not have witnessed; and this fifth disciple, in like manner, does homage to the Messiah, under his titles "the Son of God, the King of Israel." Yet this proof of more than human knowledge, Jesus declares to be as nothing in comparison with the more striking signs of the Divine protection and favour, which he asserts, under the popular and significant image of the perpetual intervention of angels, that his chosen followers are hereafter to witness.

Jesus commences
his career
as a
teacher.

Jesus had now commenced his career: disciples had attached themselves to this new master, and his claim to a divine mission must necessarily be accompanied by the signs and wonders which were to ratify the appearance of the Messiah. Yet even his miraculous powers had nothing of the imposing, the appalling, or public character, looked for, no doubt, by those who expected that the appeal would be made to their senses and their passions, to their terror and their hope, not to the more tranquil emotions of gratitude and love. But of this more hereafter.

First miracle,
Anti-Essene-
nian.

The first miracle of Jesus was the changing the water into wine, at the marriage feast at Cana, in Galilee (2). This event, however, was not merely remarkable as being the first occasion for the display of supernatural power, but as developing in some degree the primary principles of the new religious revelation. The attendance of Jesus at a marriage festival, his contributing to the festive hilarity, more particularly his sanctioning the use of wine on such occasions, at once separated and set him apart from that sect with which he was most likely to be confounded. John, no doubt, passed with the vulgar for a stricter Essene, many of whom, it has been before said, observed the severest morality, and, in one great point, differed most widely from all their brethren. They disregarded the ceremonies of the law, even the solemn national festivals, and depreciated sacrifices. Shut up, in short, in their own monastic establishments, they had substituted observances of their own for those of the Mosaic institutes. In all these points. John, who no where

(1) John, i. 43 - 51

(2) John, vi. 1-11

appears to have visited Jerusalem, at least after his assumption of the prophetic office (for his presence there would doubtless have excited much commotion), followed the Essenian practice. Like them he was severe, secluded, monastic, or rather eremitical in his habits and language. But among the most marked peculiarities of the Essenian fraternity was their aversion to marriage. Though some of the less rigid of their communities submitted to this inevitable evil, yet those who were of higher pretensions, and doubtless of higher estimation, maintained inviolable celibacy, and had fully imbibed that Oriental principle of asceticism, which proscribed all indulgence of the gross and material body, as interfering with the purity of the immaculate spirit. The perfect religious being was he who had receded to the utmost from all human passion; who had withdrawn his senses from all intercourse with the material world, or rather had estranged his mind from all objects of sense, and had become absorbed in the silent and ecstatic contemplation of the Deity (1). This mysticism was the vital principle of the Essenian observances in Judæa, and of those of the Therapeutæ, or Contemplatists, in Egypt, the lineal ancestors of the Christian monks and hermits. By giving public countenance to a marriage ceremony, still more by sanctioning the use of wine on such occasions (for wine was likewise proscribed by Essenian usage), Jesus thus, at the outset of his career, as he afterwards placed himself in direct opposition to the other prevailing sects, so he had already receded from the practice of these recluse mystics, who formed the third, and though not in numbers, yet in character and influence, by no means unimportant religious party.

After this event in Cana (2), Jesus, with his mother, his brethren, and some of his disciples, took up their abode, not in their native town of Nazareth, but in the village of Capernaum (3), which was situated not far from the rising city of Tiberias, on the shore of the beautiful lake, the sea of Gennesareth. It was called the Village of Comfort, or the Lovely Village, from a spring of delicious water, and became afterwards the chief residence of Jesus, and the great scene of his wonderful works (4).

Capernaum.

(1) It may be worth observing (for the connection of Jesus with the Essenes has been rather a favourite theory) that his illustrations so perpetually drawn from the marriage rite, and from the vineyard, would be in direct opposition to Essenian phraseology. All these passages were peculiarly embarrassing to the Gnostic ascetics. "Noluit Marcion sub imagine Domini a nuptiis relictis Christum cogitari: detestatorem nuptiarum," he rejected from his Gospel, Luke, xiv. 7—11. See the Gospel of Marcion by Hahn in Thilo. Cod. Apoc. Nov. Testam. p. 444. and 449.

(2) Maundrell places Cana north-west of Nazareth; it was about a day's journey from Capernaum. Josephus (*De Vita Suâ*) marched all night from Cana, and arrived at Tiberias in the morning.

(3) John, ii. 12.

(4) Among the remarkable and distinctive peculiarities of the Gospel of St. John, is the much greater length at which he relates the events which occurred during the earlier visits of Jesus to Jerusalem, about which the other Evangelists are either entirely silent or extremely brief. I cannot help suspecting a very natural reason for this fact, that John was the constant companion of his Master during these journeys, and that the other apostles were much less regular in their attendance upon him during these more distant excursions, especially at the earlier period. The Gospel of St. John (some few passages omitted) might be described as the acts of Jesus in Jerusalem and its neighbourhood.

First pas-
over, A. D.
27.

Jesus at
Jerusalem

The Tem-
ple a mart.

The Passover approached (1), the great festival (2) which assembled not only from all parts of Palestine, but even from remoter regions, the more devout Jews, who at this period of the year constantly made their pilgrimage to the Holy City : regular caravans came from Babylonia and Egypt ; and no doubt, as we shall explain hereafter, considerable numbers from Syria, Asia Minor, and the other provinces of the Roman empire. There can be no doubt that at least vague rumours of the extraordinary transactions which had already excited public attention towards Jesus of Nazareth, must have preceded his arrival at Jerusalem. The declaration of the Baptist, however neither himself nor many of his immediate disciples might attend the feast, could not but have transpired. Though the single miracle wrought at Cana might not have been distinctly reported at Jerusalem—though the few disciples who may have followed him from Galilee, having there disseminated the intelligence of his conduct and actions, might have been lost in the multitude and confusion of the crowded city—though, on the other hand, the impressions thus made, would be still further counter-balanced by the general prejudice against Galilee, more especially against a Galilean from Nazareth—still the son of Mary, even at his first appearance in Jerusalem, seems to have been looked on with a kind of reverential awe. His actions were watched, and though both the ruling powers, and, as yet apparently, the leading Pharisees kept aloof, though he is neither molested by the jealousy of the latter, nor excites the alarm of the former, yet the mass of the people already observed his words and his demeanour with anxious interest. The conduct of Jesus tended to keep up this mysterious uncertainty so likely to work on the imagination of a people thus ripe for religious excitement. He is said to have performed “ many miracles,” but these, no doubt, were still of a private, secret, and unimposing character ; and on all other points he maintains the utmost reserve, and avoids with the most jealous precaution any action or language which might directly commit him with the rulers or the people.

One act alone was public, commanding, and authoritative. The outer court of the Temple had become, particularly at the period of the greatest solemnity, a scene of profane disorder and confusion. As the Jews assembled from all quarters of the country, almost of the world, they were under the necessity of purchasing the victims for their offerings on the spot ; and the rich man who could afford a sheep or an ox, or the poor who was content with the humbler oblation of a pair of doves, found the dealer at hand to supply his wants. The traders in sheep, cattle, and pigeons, had therefore been permitted to establish themselves within the pre-

(1) John, ii. 13.

(2) Many writers suppose that about half a year passed between the baptism of Jesus and

this passover. This is possible ; but it appears to me that there is no evidence whatever as to the length of the period.

cincts of the Temple in the court of the Gentiles (1); and a line of shops (*tabernæ*) ran along the outer wall of the inner court. Every Jew made an annual payment of a half-shekel to the Temple; and as the treasury, according to ancient usage, only received the coin of Palestine (2), those who came from distant provinces were obliged to change their foreign money, the relative value of which was probably liable to considerable fluctuation. It is evident from the strong language of Jesus, that not only a fair and honest, but even a questionable and extortionate traffic was conducted within the holy precincts. Nor is it impossible, that even in the Temple courts trade might be carried on less connected with the religious character of the place. Throughout the East, the periodical assemblages of the different tribes of the same descent at some central temple, is intimately connected with commercial views (3). The neighbourhood of the Holy Place is the great fair or exchange of the tribe or nation. Even to the present day, Mecca, at the time of the great concourse of worshippers at the tomb of the Prophet, is a mart for the most active traffic among the merchant pilgrims, who form the caravans from all quarters of the Mahometan world (4).

We may conceive how the deep and awful stillness, which ought to have prevailed within the inner courts, dedicated to the adoration of the people—how the quiet prayer of the solitary worshipper, and the breathless silence of the multitude, while the priests were performing the more important ceremonies, either offering the national sacrifice, or entering the Holy Place, must have been interrupted by the close neighbourhood of this disorderly market. How dissonant must have been the noises of the bleating sheep, the lowing cattle, the clamours and disputes, and all the tumult and confusion thus crowded into a space of no great extent. No doubt the feelings of the more devout must long before have been shocked by this desecration of the holy precincts; and when Jesus commanded the expulsion of all these traders out of the court of the Temple, from the almost unresisting submission with which they abandoned their lucrative posts, at the command of one invested in no public authority, and who could have appeared to them no more than a simple Galilean peasant, it is clear that this assertion of the sanctity of the Temple must have been a popular act with the ma-

Expulsion
of these
traders.

(1) John, ii. 14. 25.

(2) According to Hug, "the ancient imposts which were introduced before the Roman dominion were valued according to the Greek coinage; e.g. the taxes of the temple, Matt. xvii. 24. Joseph. B. J. vii. 6. 6. The offerings were paid in these, Mark, xii. 42. Luke, xxi. 2. A payment which proceeded from the Temple treasury, was made according to the ancient national payment by weight, Matt. xxvi. 15. [This is very doubtful] But in common business, trade, wages, sale

etc., the assis and denarius and Roman coin were usual. Matt. x. 29. Luke, xii. 6. Matt. xx. 2. Mark, xiv. 5. John, xii. 5. vi. 7. The more modern state taxes are likewise paid in the coin of the nation which exercises at the time the greatest authority. Matt. xxii. 19. Mark, xii. 15. Luke, xx. 24." Vol. i. p. 14. After all, however, some of these words may be translations

(3) Heeren, *Ideen*, *passim*.

(4) Burckhardt, *Travels in Arabia*.

jority of the worshippers (1). Though Jesus is said personally to have exerted himself, assisting with a light scourge probably in driving out the cattle, it is not likely that if he had stood alone, either the calm and commanding dignity of his manner, or even his appeal to the authority of the Sacred Writings, which forbade the profanation of the Temple as a place of merchandise, would have overpowered the sullen obstinacy of men engaged in a gainful traffic, sanctioned by ancient usage. The same profound veneration for the Temple, which took such implacable offence at the subsequent language of Jesus, would look with unallayed admiration on the zeal for "the Father's House," which would not brook the intrusion of worldly pursuits, or profane noises within its hallowed gates.

Expectations
raised by
this event.

Of itself, then, this act of Jesus might not amount to the assumption of authority over the Temple of God: it was, perhaps, no more than a courageous zealot for the law might have done (2); but combined with the former mysterious rumours about his character and his miraculous powers, it invested him at once in the awful character of one, in whose person *might* appear the long-desired, the long expected Messiah. The multitude eagerly throng around him, and demand some supernatural sign of his divine mission. The establishment of the Law had been accompanied, according to the universal belief, with the most terrific demonstrations of Almighty power—the rocking of the earth, the blazing of the mountain. Would the restoration of the Theocracy in more ample power, and more enduring majesty, be unattended with the same appalling wonders? The splendid images in the highly figurative writings of the Prophets, the traditions, among the mass of the people equally authoritative, had prepared them to expect the coming of the Messiah to be announced by the obedient elements. It would have been difficult, by the most signal convulsions of nature, to have come up to their high-wrought expectations. Private acts of benevolence to individuals, preternatural cures of diseases, or the restoration of disordered faculties, fell far beneath the notions of men, blind, perhaps, to the moral beauty of such actions. They required public, if we may so speak, national miracles, and those of the most stupendous nature. To their demand, Jesus calmly answered by an obscure and somewhat oracular allusion to the remote event of his own resurrection, the one great "sign" of Christianity, to which it is remarkable that Christ constantly refers,

(1) I think these considerations make it less improbable that this event should have taken place on two separate occasions, and under similar circumstances. The account of St. John places this incident at this period of our Lord's life; the other Evangelists during his last visit to Jerusalem. I confess, indeed, for my own part, that even if it be an error in chronological ar-

rangement in one or other of the Evangelists, my faith in the historical reality of the event would not be in the least shaken.

(2) Legally only the magistrate (*i.e.* the Sanhedrin), or a Prophet, could rectify abuses in the Temple of God. A Prophet must show his commission by some miracle or prediction. Grotius and Whitby.

when required to ratify his mission by some public miracle (1). The gesture, by which he probably confined his meaning to the temple of his body, which though destroyed, was to be raised up again in three days, was seen, indeed, by his disciples, yet, even by them, but imperfectly understood; by the people in general his language seemed plainly to imply the possible destruction of the Temple. An appalling thought, and feebly counterbalanced by the assertion of his power to rebuild it in three days!

This misapprehended speech struck on the most sensitive chord in the high-strung religious temperament of the Jewish people. Their national pride, their national existence, were identified with the inviolability of the Temple. Their passionate and zealous fanaticism on this point can scarcely be understood but after the profound study of their history. In older times, the sad and loathsome death of Antiochus Epiphanes, in more recent, the fate of Crassus, perishing amid the thirsting sands of the desert, and of Pompey, with his headless trunk exposed to the outrages of the basest of mankind on the strand of Egypt, had been construed into manifest visitations of the Almighty, in revenge for the plunder and profanation of his Temple. Their later history is full of the same spirit; and even in the horrible scenes of the fatal siege by Titus, this indelible passion survived all feelings of nature or of humanity: the fall of the Temple was like the bursting of the heart of the nation.

Reverence
of the
Jews for
the Tem-
ple.

From the period at which Herod the Great had begun to restore the dilapidated work of Zorobabel, forty-six years had elapsed, and still the magnificence of the king, or the wealth and devotion of the principal among the people, had found some new work on which to expend those incalculable riches, which, from these sources, the tribute of the whole nation, and the donations of the pious, continued to pour into the Temple treasury. And this was the building of which Jesus, as he was understood, could calmly contemplate the fall, and daringly promise the immediate restoration. To their indignant murmurs, Jesus, it should seem, made no reply. The explanation would, perhaps, have necessarily led to a more distinct prediction of his own death and resurrection, than it was yet expedient to make, especially on so public a scene. But how deeply this mistaken speech sunk into the popular mind, may be estimated, from its being adduced as the most serious charge against Jesus at his trial; and the bitterest scorn, with which he was followed to his crucifixion, exhausted itself in a fierce and sarcastic allusion to this supposed assertion of power.

Their ex-
pectations
disap-
pointed.

Still, although with the exasperated multitude the growing veneration of Jesus might be checked by this misapprehended speech, a more profound impression had been made among some of the

Nicodemus.

more thinking part of the community. Already one, if not more members, of the Sanhedrin, began to look upon him with interest, perhaps with a secret inclination to espouse his doctrines. That one, named Nicodemus, determined to satisfy himself by a personal interview, as to the character and pretensions of the new Teacher (1). Nicodemus had hitherto been connected with the Pharisaic party, and he dreaded the jealousy of that powerful sect, who, though not yet in declared hostility against Jesus, watched, no doubt, his motions with secret aversion; for they could not but perceive that he made no advances towards them, and treated with open disregard their minute and austere observance of the literal and traditionary law, their principles of separation from the "unclean" part of the community, and their distinctive dress and deportment. The popular and accessible demeanour of Jesus showed at once that he had nothing in common with the spirit of this predominant religious faction. Nicodemus, therefore, chooses the dead of the night to obtain his secret interview with Jesus; he salutes him with a title, that of rabbi, assumed by none but those who were at once qualified and authorised to teach in public; and he recognises at once his divine mission, as avouched by his wonderful works. But, with astonishment almost overpowering, the Jewish ruler hears the explanation of the first principles of the new religion. When the heathen proselyte was admitted into Judaism, he was considered to be endowed with new life: he was separated from all his former connections; he was born again to higher hopes, to more extended knowledge, to a more splendid destiny (2). But now, even the Jew of the most unimpeachable descent from Abraham, the Jew of the highest estimation, so as to have been chosen into the court of Sanhedrin, and who had maintained the strictest obedience to the law, in order to become a member of the new community, required a change no less complete. He was to pass through the ceremony emblematic of moral purification. To him, as to the most unclean of strangers, baptism was to be the mark of his initiation into the new faith; and a secret internal transmutation was to take place by divine agency in his heart, which was to communicate a new principle of moral life. Without this, he could not attain to that which he had hitherto supposed either the certain privilege of his Israelitish descent, or at least of his conscientious adherence to the law. Eternal life, Jesus declared, was to depend solely on the reception of the Son of God, who, he not obscurely intimated, had descended from heaven, was present in his person, and was not universally received, only from the want

(1) John, iii. 1-21.

(2) A gentile proselyted, and a slave set free, is as a child new born; he must know no more of his kindred. Maimonides. Lightfoot. Hagp. Ex.

* This notion of a second moral birth is by no means uncommon in the East. The Sanscrit name of a Brahmin is dwija, the twice born. Bopp. Gloss. Sanser.

of moral fitness to appreciate his character. This light was too pure to be admitted into the thick darkness which was brooding over the public mind, and rendered it impenetrable by the soft and quiet rays of the new doctrine. Jesus, in short, almost without disguise or reservation, announced himself to the wondering ruler as the Messiah, while, at the same time, he enigmatically foretold his rejection by the people. The age was not ripe for the exhibition of the Divine Goodness in his person; it still yearned for a revelation of the terrible, destructive, revengeful *Power* of the Almighty — a national deity which should embody, as it were, the prevailing sentiments of the nation. Nor came he to fulfil that impious expectation of Jewish pride—the condemnation of the world, of all Gentile races, to the worst calamities, while on Israel alone his blessings were to be showered with exclusive bounty (1). He came as a common benefactor—as an universal Saviour—to the whole human race. Nicodemus, it should seem, left the presence of Jesus, if not a decided convert, yet impressed with still deeper reverence. Though never an avowed disciple, yet, with other members of the Sanhedrin, he was only restrained by his dread of the predominant party: more than once we find him seizing opportunities of showing his respect and attachment for the teacher, whose cause he had not courage openly to espouse; and, perhaps, his secret influence, with that of others similarly disposed, may, for a time, have mitigated or obstructed the more violent designs of the hostile party.

Thus ended the first visit of Jesus to Jerusalem since his assumption of a public character. His influence had, in one class probably, made considerable, though secret, progress; with others, a dark feeling of hostility had been more deeply rooted; while this very difference of sentiment was likely to increase the general suspense and interest, as to the future development of his character. As yet, it should seem, unless in that most private interview with Nicodemus, he had not openly avowed his claim to the title of the Messiah: an expression of St. John (2), “he did not trust himself to them,” seems to imply the extreme caution and reserve which he maintained towards all the converts which he made during his present visit to Jerusalem.

(1) Quæ sequuntur inde a versiculo decimo septimo proprie ad Judæos spectant, et haud dubie dicta sunt a Domino contra opinionem illam impiam et in genus humanum iniquam, cum existimarent Messiam non nisi Judaicum populum liberaturum, reliquas vero gentes omnes suppli-

ciis atrocissimis affecturum, penitusque perditurum esse. Titman. Mel. in Joan. p. 128.

(2) John, ii. 24. οὐκ ἐπίστευεν αὐτόν; he did not trust himself to them, he did not commit himself.

CHAPTER IV.

PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND PASSOVER.

Departure
from Jeru-
salem.

ON the dispersion of the strangers from the metropolis, at the close of the Passover, Jesus, with his more immediate followers, passed a short time in Judæa, where such multitudes crowded to the baptism administered by his disciples, that the adherents of John began to find the concourse to their master somewhat diminished. The Baptist had removed his station to the other side of the Jordan, and fixed himself by a stream, which afforded a plentiful supply of water, near the town of Salim, in Peræa. The partisans of John, not it should seem without jealousy, began to dispute concerning the relative importance of the baptism of their master, and that of him whom they were disposed to consider his rival. But these unworthy feelings were strongly repressed by John. In terms still more emphatic he re-asserted his own secondary station : he was but the paranymp, the humble attendant on the bridegroom, Christ the bride-groom himself : his doctrine was that of earth, that of Christ was from heaven ; in short, he openly announces Jesus as the Son of the Almighty Father, and as the author of everlasting life (1).

John the
Baptist,
and Herod.

The career of John was drawing to a close. His new station in Peræa was within the dominions of Herod Antipas. On the division of the Jewish kingdom at the death of Herod the Great, Galilee and Peræa had formed the tetrarchate of Antipas. Herod was engaged in a dangerous war with Aretas, king of Arabia Petræa, whose daughter he had married. But having formed an incestuous connection with the wife of his brother, Herod Philip, his Arabian queen indignantly fled to her father, who took up arms to revenge her wrongs against her guilty husband (2). How far Herod could depend in this contest on the loyalty of his subjects, was extremely doubtful. It is possible he might entertain hopes that the repudiation of a foreign alliance, ever hateful to the Jews, and the union with a branch of the Asmonean line (for Herodias was the daughter of Herod the Great, by Mariamne), might counterbalance in the popular estimation the injustice and criminality of his marriage with his brother's wife (3). The influence of John (according to Josephus) was almost unlimited. The subjects, and even the sol-

(1) John, iii. 22. 36.

(2) Luke, iii. 19. Matt. xiv. 3. 5. Mark, vi. 17. 20.

(3) This natural view of the subject appears to me to harmonise the accounts in the gospel.

with that of Josephus. Josephus traces the persecution of the Baptist to Herod's dread of popular tumult and insurrection, without mentioning the real cause of that dread, which we find in the Evangelic narrative.

diery, of the tetrarch crowded with devout submission around the Prophet. On his decision might depend the wavering loyalty of the whole province. But John denounced with open indignation the royal incest, and declared the marriage with a brother's wife to be a flagrant violation of the law. Herod, before long, ordered him to be seized and imprisoned in the strong fortress of Machærus, on the remote border of his transjordanic territory.

Jesus, in the mean time, apprehensive of the awakening jealousy of the Pharisees, whom his increasing success inflamed to more avowed animosity, left the borders of Judæa, and proceeded on his return to Galilee (1). The nearer road lay through the province of Samaria (2). The mutual hatred between the Jews and Samaritans, ever since the secession of Sanballat, had kept the two races not merely distinct, but opposed to each other with the most fanatical hostility. This animosity, instead of being allayed by time, had but grown the more inveterate, and had recently been embittered by acts, according to Josephus, of wanton and unprovoked outrage on the part of the Samaritans. During the administration of Coponius, certain of this hateful race, early in the morning on one of the days of the passover, had stolen into the temple at Jerusalem, and defiled the porticoes and courts by strewing them with dead men's bones — an abomination the most offensive to the Jewish principles of cleanliness and sanctity (3). Still later, they had frequently taken advantage of the position in which their district lay, directly between Judæa and Galilee, to interrupt the concourse of the religious Galileans to the capital (4). Jealous that such multitudes should pass their sacred mountain, Gerizim, to worship in the temple at Jerusalem, they often waylaid the incautious pilgrim, and thus the nearest road to Jerusalem had become extremely insecure. Our history will show how calmly Jesus ever pursued his course through these conflicting elements of society, gently endeavoured to allay the implacable schism, and set the example of that mild and tolerant spirit, so beautifully embodied in his precepts. He passed on in quiet security through the dangerous district, and it is remarkable that here, safe from the suspicious vigilance of the Pharisaic party, among these proscribed aliens from the hopes of Israel, he more distinctly and publicly than he had hitherto done, avowed his title as the Messiah, and developed that leading characteristic of his religion, the abolition of all local and national deities, and the promulgation of one comprehensive faith, in which the great Eternal Spirit was to be worshipped by all mankind in "spirit and in truth."

There was a well (5) near the gates of Sichem, a name which by

(1) Matt. iv. 12.; Mark, i. 14.; Luke, iv. 14.

(2) John, iv. 1. 32.

(3) Hist. of the Jews, ii. 151.

(4) Ibid. 169.

(5) Tradition still points to this well, about a mile distant from the walls of Sichem, which Maundrell supposes to have extended farther. A church was built over it by the Empress Helena.

Jesus passes through Samaria.
Hostility of Jews and Samaritans.

the Jews had been long perverted into the opprobrious term *Sich-ar* (1). This spot, according to immemorial tradition, the patriarch Jacob had purchased, and here were laid the bones of Joseph, his elder son, to whose descendant, Ephraim, this district had been assigned. Sichem lay in a valley between the two famous mountains Ebal and Gerizim, on which the law was read, and ratified by the acclamations of the assembled tribes; and on the latter height stood the rival temple of the Samaritans, which had so long afflicted the more zealous Jews by its daring opposition to the one chosen sanctuary on mount Moriah. The well bore the name of the patriarch; and while his disciples entered the town to purchase provisions (2), a traffic from which probably few, except the disciples of Christ, would not have abstained (3), except in extreme necessity, Jesus reposed by its margin. It was the sultry hour of noon, about twelve o'clock (4), when a woman, as is the general usage in the East, where the females commonly resort to the wells or tanks to obtain water for all domestic uses, approached the well. Jesus, whom she knew not to be her countryman, either from his dress, or perhaps his dialect or pronunciation, in which the inhabitants of the Ephraimitish district of Samaria differed both from the Jews and Galileans, to her astonishment, asked her for water to quench his thirst. For in general the lip of a Jew, especially a Pharisaic Jew, would have shrunk in disgust from the purest element in a vessel defiled by the hand of a Samaritan. Drawing, as usual, his similitudes from the present circumstances, Jesus excites the wonder of the woman by speaking of living waters at his command, waters which were to nourish the soul for everlasting life: he increases her awe by allusions which show more than mortal knowledge of her own private history (she was living in concubinage, having been married to five husbands), and at length clearly announces that the local worship, both on Gerizim and at Jerusalem, was to give place to a more sublime and comprehensive faith. The astonished woman confesses her belief that, on the coming of the Messiah, truths equally wonderful may be announced. Jesus, for the first time, distinctly and unequivocally declares himself to be the Messiah (5). On the return of the disciples from the town, their

but it is now entirely destroyed. "It is dug in a firm rock, and contains about three yards in diameter, and thirty-five in depth, five of which we found full of water." Maundrell, p. 62.

(1) From a Hebrew word meaning a "lie" or an "idol." The name had no doubt grown into common use, as it could not be meant by the evangelists in an offensive sense.

(2) According to the traditions they might buy of them, use their labour, or say amen to their benedictions (*Beracoth*, i. 8.), lodge i. e. their towns, but not receive any gift or kindness from them. Buxtorf, *Lex Talm.* 1370. Lightfoot *in loc.*

(3) Probably the more rigid would have re-

frained, even from this permitted intercourse, unless in cases of absolute necessity.

(4) This is the usual opinion. Dr. Townson, in his ingenious argument to prove that the hours of John are not Roman or Jewish but Asiatic, adduces this passage, as in his favour, the evening being the usual time at which the women resort to the wells. On the other hand it is observed that noon was the usual time of dinner among the Jews, and the disciples probably entered the town for provisions for that meal.

(5) Leclerc observes that Jesus spoke with more freedom to the woman of Samaria, as he had no fear of sedition, or violent attempts to make him a king. On John, iv. 26.

Jewish prejudices are immediately betrayed at beholding their master thus familiarly conversing with a woman of the hateful race : on the other hand the intelligence of the woman runs rapidly through the town, and the Samaritans crowd forth in eager interest to behold and listen to the extraordinary teacher.

The nature and origin of the Samaritan belief in the Messiah is even a more obscure question than that of the Jews (1). That belief was evidently more clear and defined than the vague expectation which prevailed throughout the East, still it was probably, like that of the Jews, by no means distinct or definite. It is generally supposed that the Samaritans, admitting only the law, must have rested their hope solely on some ambiguous or latent prediction in the books of Moses, who had foretold the coming of another and a mightier prophet than himself. But though the Samaritans may not have admitted the authority of the prophets as equal to that of the law ; though they had not installed them in the regular and canonised code of their sacred books, it does not follow that they were unacquainted with them, or that they did not listen with devout belief to the more general promises, which by no means limited the benefits of the Messiah's coming to the local sanctuary of Jerusalem, or to the line of the Jewish kings. There appear some faint traces of a belief in the descent of the Messiah from the line of Joseph, of which, as belonging to the tribe of Ephraim, the Samaritans seem to have considered themselves the representatives (2). Nor is it improbable, from the subsequent rapid progress of the doctrines of Simon Magus, which were deeply impregnated with Orientalism (3), that the Samaritan notion of the Messiah had already a strong Magian or Babylonian tendency. On the other hand, if their expectations rested on less definite grounds, the Samaritans were unenslaved by many of those fatal prejudices of the Jews, which so completely temporalised their notions of the Messiah, and were free from that rigid and exclusive pride which so jealously appropriated the divine promises. If the Samaritans could not pretend to an equal share in the splendid anticipations of the

Samaritan
belief in
the Mes-
siah.

(1) Bertholdt, ch. vii. which contains extracts from the celebrated Samaritan letters, and references to the modern writers who have translated them, and discussed their purport. Quæ vero fuerit sp̄i Messiani ratio neque ex hoc loco, neque ex ullo alio antiquiore monumento accuratius intelligi potest, et ex recentiorum dñum Samaritanorum epistolis innouit. Atque his testibus prophetam quemdam illustrem venturum esse sperant, cui observaturi sint populi ac credituri in illum, et in legem et in monte Garizim, qui fidem Mosaicam evertitur sit, tabernaculum restitutus in monte Garizim, populum suum beaturus, postea moriturus et sepeliendus apud Josephum (i. e. in tribu Ephraim). Quo tempore venturus sit, id nemini præter Deum cognitum esse. Gesenius in this note to the curious Samaritan poems which he has published,

(p. 75.) proceeds to say that his name is to be "Hasch-hab or Hat-hab, which he translates conversor (converter) as converting the people to a higher state of religion. The Messiah Ben Joseph of the Rabbins, he observes, is of a much later date. Quotations concerning the later may be found in Eisenmenger, ii. 720.

(2) We still want a complete and critical edition of the Samaritan chronicle (the Liber Josue), which may throw light on the character and tenets of this remarkable branch of the Jewish nation. Though in its present form a comparatively modern compilation, it appears to me, from the fragments hitherto edited, to contain manifest vestiges of very ancient tradition. See an abstract at the end of Hottinger's Dissertationes anti Moriniane.

(3) Mosheim, ii. 19.

ancient prophets, they were safer from their mis-interpretation. They had no visions of universal dominion; they looked not to Samaria or Sichem to become the metropolis of some mighty empire. They had some legend of the return of Moses to discover the sacred vessels concealed near mount Gerizim (1), but they did not expect to see the banner raised, and the conqueror go forth to beat the nations to the earth and prostrate mankind before their re-established theocracy. They might even be more inclined to recognise the Messiah in the person of a purely religious reformer, on account of the overbearing confidence with which the rival people announced their hour of triumph, when the Great King should erect his throne on Sion, and punish all the enemies of the chosen race, among whom the "foolish people," as they were called, "who dwell at Sichem (2)," would not be the last to incur the terrible vengeance. A Messiah who would disappoint the insulting hopes of the Jews would, for that very reason, be more acceptable to the Samaritans.

Samaritan
Sanhedrin.

The Samaritan commonwealth was governed, under the Roman supremacy, by a council or sanhedrin : but this body had not assumed the pretensions of a divinely inspired hierarchy; nor had they a jealous and domineering sect, like that of the Pharisees, in possession of the public instruction, and watching every new teacher who did not wear the garb, or speak the Shibboleth of their faction, as guilty of an invasion of their peculiar province. But, from whatever cause, the reception of Jesus among the Samaritans, was strongly contrasted with that among the Jews. They listened with reverence, and entreated him to take up his permanent abode within their province; and many among them distinctly acknowledged him as the Messiah and Saviour of the world.

Second
miracle in
Caper-
naum.

Still a residence, longer than was necessary in the infected air, as the Jews would suppose it, of Samaria, would have strengthened the growing hostility of the ruling powers, and of the prevailing sect among the Jews. After two days, therefore, Jesus proceeded on his journey, re-entered Galilee, and publicly assumed, in that province, his office as the teacher of a new religion. The report of a second, and more extraordinary miracle than that before performed in the town of Cana, tended to establish the fame of his actions in Jerusalem, which had been disseminated by those Galileans who had returned more quickly from the passover, and had excited a general interest to behold the person of whom such wonderful rumours were spread abroad (3). The nature of the miracle, the healing a youth who lay sick at Capernaum, about twenty-five

(1) Hist. of the Jews, ii. 160.
(2) There be two manner of nations which my heart abhorreth, and the third is no nation. They that sit upon the mountain of Samaria, and they that dwell among the Philistines, and

that foolish people that dwell at Sichem. Ecclesiast. i. 25, 26.

(3) Matt. iv. 13, 17.; Mark, i. 14, 15.; Luke, iv. 14, 15.; John, iv. 43—45.

miles distant from Cana, where he then was; the station of the father, at whose entreaty he restored the son to health (he was probably on the household establishment of Herod), could not fail to raise the expectation to a higher pitch, and to prepare the inhabitants of Galilee to listen with eager deference to the new doctrines (1).

One place alone received the son of Mary with cold and inhospitable unconcern, and rejected his claims with indignant violence — his native town of Nazareth. The history of this transaction is singularly true to human nature (2). Where Jesus was unknown, the awe-struck imagination of the people, excited by the fame of his wonderful works, beheld him already arrayed in the sanctity of a prophetic, if not of a divine, mission. Nothing intruded on their thoughts to disturb their reverence for the commanding gentleness of his demeanour, the authoritative persuasiveness of his language, the holiness of his conduct, the celebrity of his miracles: he appeared before them in the pure and unmingled dignity of his public character. But the inhabitants of Nazareth had to struggle with old impressions, and to exalt their former familiarity into a feeling of deference or veneration. In Nazareth he had been seen from his childhood; and though gentle, blameless, popular, nothing had occurred, up to the period of his manhood, to place him so much above the ordinary level of mankind. His father's humble station and employment had, if we may so speak, still farther undignified the person of Jesus to the mind of his fellow-townsmen. In Nazareth Jesus was still "the carpenter's son." We think, likewise, that we discover in the language of the Nazarenes something of local jealousy against the more favoured town of Capernaum. If Jesus intended to assume a public and distinguished character, why had not his native place the fame of his splendid works? why was Capernaum honoured, as the residence of the new prophet, rather than the city in which he had dwelt from his youth?

It was in the synagogue of Nazareth, where Jesus had hitherto been a humble and devout listener, that he stood up in the character of a Teacher. According to the usage, the chazan or minister of the synagogue (3), whose office it was to deliver the volume of the law or the prophets appointed to be read to the person to whom that function had fallen, or who might have received permission from the rulers of the synagogue to address the congregation, gave it into the hands of Jesus. Jesus opened on the passage in the beginning of the 16th chapter of Isaiah (4), by universal

Nazareth.
Inhospitable reception of Jesus.

Jesus in the synagogue.

(1) John, iv. 46—54.

(2) Luke, iv. 16—30. There appears to be an allusion (John, iv. 44.) to this incident, which may have taken place before the second miracle.

(3) It is said that on the Sabbath the law was read in succession by seven persons—a priest, a Levite, and five Israelites—and never on any

other day by less than three. The prophets were read by any one; in general one of the former readers, whom the minister might summon to the office.

(4) It is of some importance to the chronology of the life of Christ, to ascertain whether this psalm or portion was that appointed in the or

consent applied to the coming of the Messiah, and under its beautiful images describing with the most perfect truth the character of the new religion. It spoke of good tidings to the poor, of consolation in every sorrow, of deliverance from every affliction :— “ He hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted; to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind; to set at liberty them that are bound.” It went on, as it were, to announce the instant fulfilment of the prediction, in the commencement of the “ acceptable year of the Lord;” but before it came to the next clause, which harmonised ill with the benign character of the new faith, and spoke of “ the day of vengeance,” he broke off and closed the book. He proceeded, probably at some length, to declare the immediate approach of these times of wisdom and peace.

The whole assembly was in a state of pleasing astonishment at the ease of his delivery, and the sweet copiousness of his language; they could scarcely believe that it was the youth whom they had so often seen, the son of a humble father, in their streets, and who had enjoyed no advantages of learned education. Some of them, probably either by their countenance, or tone, or gesture, expressed their incredulity, or even their contempt, for Joseph's son; for Jesus at once declared his intention of performing no miracle to satisfy the doubts of his unbelieving countrymen :— “ No prophet is received with honour in his own country.” This avowed preference of other places before the dwelling of his youth; this refusal to grant to Nazareth any share in the fame of his extraordinary works, embittered perhaps by the suspicion that the general prejudice against their town might be strengthened, at least not discountenanced, as it might have been, by the residence of so distinguished a citizen within their walls—the reproof so obviously concealed in the words and conduct of Jesus, mingled no doubt with other fanatical motives, wrought the whole assembly to such a pitch of frenzy, that they expelled Jesus from the synagogue. Nazareth lies in a valley, from which a hill immediately rises; they hurried him up the slope, and were preparing to cast him down from the abrupt cliff on the other side, when they found that the intended victim of their wrath had disappeared.

Violence
of the
Nazarenes.

Capernaum the
chief residence of
Jesus.

Jesus retired to Capernaum, which from this time became, as it were, his head-quarters (1). This place was admirably situated for his purpose, both from the facility of communication, as well by land as by the lake, with many considerable and flourishing towns, and of escape into a more secure region, in case of any

ordinary course of reading, or one selected by Jesus. But we cannot decide this with any certainty; nor is it clear that the distribution of the leasous, according to the ritual of that period, was the same with the present liturgy of the

Jews. According to that, the 16th chapter of Isaiah would have been read about the end of August. Macknight and some other harmonists lay much stress on this point.

(1) Luke, iv. 31, 32.

threatened persecution. It lay towards the northern extremity of the lake or sea of Gennesareth (1). On the land side it was a centre from which the circuit of both Upper and Lower Galilee might begin. The countless barks of the fishermen employed upon the lake, many of whom became his earliest adherents, could transport him with the utmost ease to any of the cities on the western bank; while, if danger approached from Herod or the ruling powers of Galilee, he had but to cross to the opposite shore, the territory, at least at the commencement of his career, of Philip, the most just and popular of the sons of Herod, and which on his death reverted to the Roman government. Nor was it an unfavourable circumstance, that he had most likely secured the powerful protection of the officer attached to the court of Herod, whose son he had healed, and who probably resided at Capernaum.

The first act of his public career was the permanent attachment to his person, and the investing in the delegated authority of teachers of the new religion, four out of the twelve who afterwards became the apostles. Andrew and Peter were originally of Bethsaida, at the north eastern extremity of the lake, but the residence of Peter appears to have been at Capernaum. James and John were brothers, the sons of Zebedee (2). All these men had united themselves to Jesus, immediately after his baptism; the latter, if not all, had probably attended upon him during the festival in Jerusalem, but had returned to their usual avocations. Jesus saw them on the shore of the lake,—two of them were actually employed in fishing, the others at a little distance were mending their nets. At the well-known voice of their master, confirmed by the sign of the miraculous draught of fishes (3), which impressed Peter with so much awe, that he thought himself unworthy of standing in the presence of so wonderful a Being, they left their ships and followed him into the town; and though they appear to have resumed their humble occupations, on which, no doubt, their livelihood depended, it should seem that from this time they might be considered as the regular attendants of Jesus.

The reception of Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum was very different from that which he encountered in Nazareth. He was heard on the regular day of teaching, the Sabbath, not only undisturbed, but with increasing reverence and awe (4). And, indeed, if the inhabitants of Nazareth were offended, and the Galileans in general astonished at the appearance of the humble Jesus in the character of a public teacher, the tone and language which he assumed was not likely to allay their wonder. The remarkable

Apostles
chosen

Jesus
in the
synagogue
of Capernaum.

(1) This is the usual position of Capernaum, but it rests on very uncertain grounds, and some circumstances would induce me to adopt Lightfoot's opinion, that it was much nearer to the northern end of the lake.

(2) Matt. iv. 22., Mark, i. 17—20., Luke, v. 1—11.

(3) This supposes, as is most probable, that Luke, v. 1—11. refers to the same transaction.

(4) Luke, iv. 31—38.; Mark, i. 21, 22.

expression, " he speaks as one having authority and not as the scribes," seems to imply more than the extraordinary power and persuasiveness of his language.

His mode
of teach-
ing differ-
ent from
that of the
Rabbins.

The ordinary instructors of the people, whether under the name of scribes, lawyers, or rabbis, rested their whole claim to the public attention on the established sacred writings. They were the conservators, and perhaps personally *ordained* interpreters of the law, with its equally sacred traditionary comment; but they pretended to no authority, not originally derived from these sources. They did not stand forward as legislators, but as accredited expositors of the law; not as men directly inspired from on high, but as men who, by profound study and intercourse with the older wise men, were best enabled to decide on the dark, or latent, or ambiguous sense of the inspired writings; or who had received, in regular descent, the more ancient Cabala, the accredited tradition. Although, therefore, they had completely enslaved the public mind, which revered the sayings of the masters or rabbis equally with the original text of Moses and the prophets; though it is quite clear that the spiritual rabbinical dominion, which at a later period established so arbitrary a despotism over the understanding of the people, was already deeply rooted, still the basis of their supremacy rested on the popular reverence for the sacred writings. "It is written," was the sanction of all the rabbinical decrees, however those decrees might misinterpret the real meaning of the law, or "add burdens to the neck of the people," by no means intended by the wise and humane lawgiver.

Jesus came forth as a public teacher in a new and opposite character. His authority rested on no previous revelation, excepting as far as his divine commission had been foreshown in the law and the prophets. He prefaced his addresses with the unusual formulary, "I say unto you." Perpetually displaying the most intimate familiarity with the Sacred Writings, instantly silencing or baffling his adversaries by adducing, with the utmost readiness and address, texts of the law and the prophets according to the accredited interpretation, yet his ordinary language evidently assumed a higher tone. He was the direct, immediate representative of the wisdom of the Almighty Father; he appeared as equal, as superior, to Moses; as the author of a new revelation, which, although it was not to destroy the law, was in a certain sense to supersede it, by the introduction of a new and original faith. Hence the implacable hostility manifested against Jesus, not merely by the fierce, the fanatical, the violent, or the licentious, by all who might take offence at the purity and gentleness of his precepts, but by the better and more educated among the people, the scribes, the lawyers, the pharisees. Jesus at once assumed a superiority not merely over these teachers of the law, this acknowledged

religious aristocracy, whose reputation, whose interests, and whose pride were deeply pledged to the maintenance of the existing system, but he set himself above those inspired teachers, of whom the rabbis were but the interpreters. Christ uttered commandments which had neither been registered on the tablets of stone, nor defined in the more minute enactments in the book of Leviticus. He superseded at once by his simple word all that they had painfully learned, and regularly taught as the eternal, irrevocable word of God, perfect, complete, enduring no addition. Hence their perpetual endeavours to commit Jesus with the multitude, as disparaging or infringing the ordinances of Moses; endeavours which were perpetually baffled on his part, by his cautious compliance with the more important observances, and, notwithstanding the general bearing of his teaching towards the development of a higher and independent doctrine (1), his uniform respect for the letter as well as the spirit of the Mosaic institutes. But as the strength of the rabbinical hierarchy lay in the passionate jealousy of the people about the law, they never abandoned the hope of convicting Jesus on this ground, notwithstanding his extraordinary works, as a false pretender to the character of the Messiah. At all events they saw clearly that it was a struggle for the life and death of their authority. Jesus once acknowledged as the Christ, the whole fabric of their power and influence fell at once. The traditions, the Law itself, the skill of the scribe, the subtilty of the lawyer, the profound study of the rabbi, or the teacher in the synagogue and in the school, became obsolete; and the pride of superior wisdom, the long-enjoyed deference, the blind obedience with which the people had listened to their decrees, were gone by for ever. The whole hierarchy were to cede at once their rank and estimation to an humble and uninstructed peasant from Galilee, a region scorned by the better educated for its rudeness and ignorance (2), and from Nazareth, the most despised town in the despised province. Against such deep and rooted motives for animosity, which combined and knit together every feeling of pride, passion, habit, and interest, the simple and engaging demeanour of the Teacher, the beauty of the precepts, their general harmony with the spirit, however they might expand the letter of the law, the charities they breathed, the holiness they inculcated, the aptitude and imaginative felicity of the parables under which they were couched, the hopes they excited, the fears they allayed, the blessings and consolations they

Causes of the hostility of the ordinary teachers.

(1) Compare the whole of the Sermon on the Mount, especially Matt. v. 20—45.—the parables of the leaven and the grain of mustard seed—the frequent intimations of the comprehensiveness of the “kingdom of God,” as contrasted with the Jewish hierarchy.

(2) See the Compendium of the Talmud by Pinner of Berlin, intended as a kind of preface

to an edition and translation of the whole talmudical books, the curious passage (p. 60.) from the Erubin, in which the Jews and Galileans are contrasted. The Galileans did not preserve the pure speech, therefore they did not preserve pure doctrine—the Galileans had no teacher, therefore no doctrine—the Galileans did not open the book, therefore they had no doctrine.

promised, all which makes the discourses of Jesus so confessedly superior to human morality, made little impression on this class, who in some respects, as the most intellectual, might be considered as in the highest state of advancement, and therefore most likely to understand the real spirit of the new religion. The authority of Jesus could not coexist with that of the Scribes and Pharisees; and this was the great principle of the fierce opposition and jealous hostility, with which he was in general encountered by the best instructed teachers of the people.

Progress
through
Galilee.

Populous-
ness of
Galilee.

Herod
Antipas.

In Capernaum, however, no resistance seems to have been made to his success: the synagogue was open to him on every Sabbath; and wonderful cures, that of a demoniac in the synagogue itself, that of Simon's wife's mother, and of many others within the same town, established and strengthened his growing influence (1). From Capernaum he set forth to make a regular progress through the whole populous province of Galilee, which was crowded, if we are to receive the account of Josephus, with flourishing towns and cities, beyond almost any other region of the world (2). According to the statements of this author, the number of towns, and the population of Galilee, in a district of between fifty and sixty miles in length, and between sixty and seventy in breadth, was no less than 204 cities and villages, the least of which contained 15,000 souls (3). Reckoning nothing for smaller communities, and supposing each town and village to include the adjacent district, so as to allow of no scattered inhabitants in the country, the population of the province would amount to 3,060,000; of these, probably, much the larger proportion were of Jewish descent, and spoke a harsher dialect of the Aramaic, than that which prevailed in Judæa, though in many of the chief cities there was a considerable number of Syrian Greeks and of other foreign races (4). Each of these towns had one or more synagogues, in which the people met for the ordinary purposes of worship, while the more religious attended regularly at the festivals in Jerusalem. The province of Galilee with Peræa formed the tetrarchate of Herod Antipas, who, till his incestuous marriage, had treated the Baptist with respect, if not with deference, and does not appear at first to have interfered with the proceedings of Jesus. Though at one time decidedly hostile, he appears neither to have been very active in his opposition, nor to have entertained any deep or violent animosity against the person of Jesus, even at the time of his final trial. No doubt Jerusalem and

(1) Mark, i. 23—26; Luke, iv. 33—37; Matt. viii. 14, 15.; Mark, i. 29—31.; Luke, iv. 28—39.

(2) Matt. iv. 23—25.; Mark, i. 32—39; Luke, iv. 40—44.

(3) Josephi Vita, ch. xlv. B. J. 111—111. 2.

(4) According to Strabo, Galilee was full of Egyptians, Arabians and Phœnicians, lib. xvi

Josephus states of Tiberias in particular, that it was inhabited by many strangers; Scythopolis was almost a Greek city. In Casarea, and many of the other towns, the most dreadful conflicts took place, at the commencement of the war, between the two races. Hist. of the Jews, ii. 231—236.

its adjacent province were the centre and stronghold of Jewish religious and political enthusiasm; the pulse beat stronger about the heart than at the extremities. Nor, whatever personal apprehensions Herod might have entertained of an aspirant to the name of the Messiah, whom he might suspect of temporal ambition, was he likely to be actuated by the same jealousy, as the Jewish Sanhedrin, of a teacher, who confined himself to religious instruction (1). His power rested on force, not on opinion; on the strength of his guards and the protection of Rome, not on the respect which belonged to the half religious, half political pre-eminence of the rulers in Jerusalem. That which made Jesus the more odious to the native government in Judæa, his disappointment of their hopes of a temporal Messiah, and his announcement of a revolution purely moral and religious, would allay the fears and secure the indifference of Herod; to him Christianity, however imperfectly understood, would appear less dangerous than fanatical Judaism. The Pharisees were in considerable numbers, and possessed much influence over the minds of the Galileans (2); but it was in Judæa that this overwhelming faction completely predominated, and swayed the public opinion with irresistible power. Hence the unobstructed success of Jesus in this remoter region of the Holy Land, and the wisdom of selecting that part of the country where, for a time at least, he might hope to pursue unmolested his career of blessing. During this first progress he seems to have passed from town to town uninterrupted, if not cordially welcomed. Either astonishment, or prudent caution, which dreaded to offend his numerous followers; or the better feeling which had not yet given place to the fiercer passions; or a vague hope that he might yet assume all that they thought wanting to the character of the Messiah, not only attracted around him the population of the towns through which he passed, but as he approached the borders, the inhabitants of Decapolis (the district beyond the Jordan), of Judæa, and even of Jerusalem, and the remoter parts of Peræa, thronged to profit both by his teaching, and by the wonderful cures which were wrought on all who were afflicted by the prevalent diseases of the country (3).

Jesus
passes un-
molested
through
Galilee

How singular the contrast (familiarity with its circumstances, or deep and early reverence, prevent us from appreciating it justly) between the peaceful progress of the Son of Man, on the one hand healing maladies, relieving afflictions, restoring their senses to the dumb or blind; on the other gently instilling into the minds of the people those pure, and humane, and gentle principles of moral goodness, to which the wisdom of ages has been able to add nothing;

(1) The supposition of Grotius, adopted by Mr. Gresswell, that Herod was absent at Rome during the interval between the imprisonment and the death of John, and therefore during

the first progress of Jesus, appears highly probable.

(2) Luke, v. 17
3. Matt. iv. 25

Comparison with authors of other revolutions.

and every other event to which it can be compared, in the history of human kind. Compare the men who have at different periods wrought great and beneficial revolutions in the civil or the moral state of their kind; or those mythic personages, either deified men or humanised deities, which appear as the parents, or at some marked epoch in the history of different nations, embodying the highest notions of human nature or divine perfection to which the age or the people have attained—compare all these, in the most dispassionate spirit, with the impersonation of the divine goodness in Jesus Christ. It seems a conception, notwithstanding the progress in moral truth which had been made among the more intellectual of the Jews, and the nobler reasoners among the Greeks, so completely beyond the age, so opposite to the prevalent expectations of the times, as to add no little strength to the belief of the Christian in the divine origin of his faith. Was the sublime notion of the Universal Father, the God of Love, and the exhibition of as much of the divine nature as is intelligible to the limited faculties of man, his goodness and beneficent power, in the “Son of Man,” first developed in the natural progress of the human mind among the peasants of Galilee (1)? Or, as the Christian asserts with more faith, and surely not less reason, did the great Spirit, which created and animates the countless worlds, condescend to show this image and reflection of his own inconceivable nature, for the benefit of one race of created beings, to restore them to, and prepare them for, a higher and eternal state of existence?

Teaches in the synagogues and in the open air.

Manner of his discourses
Quotation from Jortin.

The synagogues, it has been said, appear to have been open to Jesus during the whole of his progress through Galilee; but it was not within the narrow walls of these buildings that he confined his instructions. It was in the open air, in the field, or in the vineyard, on the slope of the hill, or by the side of the lake, where the deck of one of his followers' vessels formed a kind of platform or tribune, that he delighted to address the wondering multitudes. His language teems with allusions to external nature, which, it has often been observed, seem to have been drawn from objects immediately around him. It would be superfluous to attempt to rival, and unjust to an author of remarkable good sense and felicity of expression, to alter the language in which this peculiarity of Christ's teaching has already been described:—“In the spring our Saviour went into the fields and sat down on a mountain, and made that discourse which is recorded in St. Matthew, and which is full of observations arising from the things which offered themselves to his sight. For when he exhorted his disciples to trust in God, he bade them behold the fowls of the air, which were then flying about them, and were fed by Divine Providence, though they did ‘not sow nor reap, nor

1) Compare the observations at the end of the first chapter

gather into barns.' He bade them take notice of the lilies of the field which were then blown, and were so beautifully clothed by the same power, and yet 'toiled not' like the husbandmen who were then at work. Being in a place where they had a wide prospect of a cultivated land, he bade them observe how God caused the sun to shine, and the rain to descend upon the fields and gardens, even of the wicked and ungrateful. And he continued to convey his doctrine to them under rural images, speaking of good *trees* and corrupt *trees*—of wolves in *sheep's clothing*—of grapes not growing upon thorns, nor figs on thistles—of the folly of casting precious things to dogs and swine—of good measure pressed down, and shaken together, and running over. Speaking at the same time to the people, many of whom were fishermen and lived much upon fish, he says, *What man of you will give his son a serpent, if he ask a fish?* Therefore when he said in the same discourse to his disciples, *Ie are the light of the world; a city that is set on a hill, and cannot be hid*, it is probable that he pointed to a city within their view, situated upon the brow of a hill. And when he called them *the salt of the earth*, he alluded, perhaps, to the husbandmen, who were manuring the ground : and when he compared every person who observed his precepts, to a man who built a house upon a rock, which stood firm ; and every one who slighted his word, to a man who built a house upon the sand, which was thrown down by the winds and floods—when he used this comparison, 'tis not improbable that he had before his eyes houses standing upon high ground, and houses standing in the valley in a ruinous condition, which had been destroyed by inundations (1)."

It was on his return to Capernaum, either at the close of the present or of a later progress through Galilee, that among the multitudes who had gathered around him from all quarters, he ascended an eminence, and delivered in a long continuous address the memorable Sermon on the Mount (2). It is not our design to enter at length on the trite, though in our opinion by no means exhausted, subject of Christian morality. We content ourselves with indicating some of those characteristic points which belong, as it were, to the historical development of the new religion, and cannot be distinctly comprehended unless in relation to the circumstances of the times : —

Sermon
on the
Mount.

Principles
of Christian
morality.

(1) Jortin's Discourses. The above is quoted and the idea is followed out at greater length and with equal beauty in Bishop Laws Reflections on the Life of Christ, at the end of his Theory of Religion.

(2) Scarcely any passage is more perplexing to the harmonist of the Gospels than the Sermon on the Mount, which appears to be inserted at two different places by St. Matthew and St. Luke. That the same striking truths should be delivered more than once in nearly the same language, or even that the same commanding situation should be more than once selected, from which to ad-

dress the people, appears not altogether improbable; but the difficulty lies in the accompanying incidents, which are almost the same, and could scarcely have happened twice. No writer who insists on the chronological order of the Evangelists, has, in my judgment, removed the difficulty. On the whole, though I have inserted my view of Christian morality, as derived from this memorable discourse, in this place, I am inclined to consider the chronology of St. Luke more accurate. Matt. v. vi. vii. Luke, vi. 20 to the end

I. Not in
unison
with the
age.

1. The morality of Jesus was not in unison with the temper or the feelings of his age. II. It was universal morality, adapted for the whole human race, and for every period of civilisation. III. It was morality grounded on broad and simple principles, which had hitherto never been laid down as the basis of human action. I. The great principle of the Mosaic theocracy was the strict apportionment of temporal happiness or calamity, at least to the nation, if not to the individual, according to his obedience or his rebellion against the divine laws. The natural consequence of this doctrine seemed to be, that prosperity was the invariable sign of the divine approval, adversity of disfavour. And this, in the time of Jesus, appears to have been carried to such an extreme, that every malady, every infirmity, was an evidence of sin in the individual, or a punishment inherited from his guilty forefathers. The only question which arose about the man born blind was, whether his affliction was the consequence of his own or his parents' criminality : he bore in his calamity the hateful evidence that he was accursed of God. This principle was perpetually struggling with the belief in a future state, and an equitable adjustment of the apparent inequalities in the present life, to which the Jewish mind had gradually expanded ; and with the natural humanity, inculcated by the spirit of the Mosaic law, towards their own brethren. But if the miseries of this life were an evidence of the divine anger, the blessings were likewise of his favour (1). Hence the prosperous, the wealthy, those exempt from human suffering and calamity, were accustomed to draw even a more false and dangerous line of demarcation than in ordinary cases, between themselves and their humble and afflicted brethren. The natural haughtiness which belonged to such superiority, acquired, as it were, a divine sanction ; nor was any vice in the Jewish character more strongly reproved by Jesus, or more hostile to his reception as the Messiah. For when the kingdom of Heaven should come—when the theocracy should be restored in more than its former splendour—who so secure of its inestimable blessings as those who were already marked and designated by the divine favour ? Among the higher orders the expectation of a more than ordinary share in the promised blessings might practically be checked from imprudently betraying itself, by the natural timidity of those who have much to lose, and by their reluctance to hazard any political convulsion. Yet nothing could be more inexplicable, or more contrary to the universal sentiment, than that Jesus should disregard the concurrence, and make no particular advances towards those who formed the spiritual as well as the temporal aristocracy of the

(1) Compare Mosheim, ii. 12. He considers this feeling almost exclusively prevalent among the Sadducees ; but from many passages of our Lord's discourses with the Pharisees, it should

seem to have been almost universal. *Pauperes et miseros existimare debebant Deum criminibus et peccatis offendisse, justamque ejus ultionem sentire.*

nation—those whose possession of the highest station seemed, in a great degree, to prove their designation for such eminence by the Almighty. “Have any of the rulers believed in him (1)?” was the contemptuous, and, as they conceived, conclusive argument against his claims, adduced by the Pharisees. Jesus not only did not condescend to favour, he ran directly counter to this prevailing notion. He announced that the kingdom of Heaven was peculiarly prepared for the humble and the afflicted; his disciples were chosen from the lowest order; and it was not obscurely intimated, that his ranks would be chiefly filled by those who were undistinguished by worldly prosperity. Yet, on the other hand, there was nothing in his language to conciliate the passions of the populace, no address to the envious and discontented spirit of the needy to inflame them against their superiors. Popular, as he was, in the highest sense of the term, nothing could be farther removed than the Prophet of Nazareth from the demagogue. The “kingdom of Heaven” was opened only to those who possessed and cultivated the virtues of their lowly station—meekness, humility, resignation, peacefulness, patience; and it was only because these virtues were most prevalent in the humbler classes, that the new faith was addressed to them. The more fierce and violent of the populace rushed into the ranks of the zealot, and enrolled themselves among the partizans of Judas the Galilean. They thronged around the robber chieftain, and secretly propagated that fiery spirit of insurrection which led, at length, to the fatal war. The meek and peaceful doctrines of Jesus found their way only into meek and peaceful hearts; the benevolent character of his miracles touched not those minds which had only imbibed the sterner, not the humaner, spirit of the Mosaic law. Thus it was lowliness of character, rather than of station, which qualified the proselyte for the new faith—the absence, in short, of all those fierce passions which looked only to a conquering, wide-ruling Messiah: and it was in elevating these virtues to the highest rank, which to the many of all orders was treason against the hopes of Israel and the promises of God, that Jesus departed most widely from the general sentiment of his age and nation. He went still further; he annihilated the main principle of the theocracy—the administration of temporal rewards and punishments in proportion to obedience or rebellion—a notion which, though, as we have said, by no means justified by common experience, and weakened by the growing belief in another life, nevertheless still held its ground in the general opinion. Sorrow, as in one sense the distinguishing mark and portion of the new religion, became sacred; and the curse of God was, as it were, removed from the afflictions of mankind. His own disciples, he himself, were to undergo a fearful probation of suffering, which could

¹ John, vii, 48

only be secure of its reward in another life. The language of Jesus confirmed the truth of the antisadducaic belief of the greater part of the nation, and assumed the certainty of another state of existence, concerning which, as yet, it spoke the current language; but which it was hereafter to expand into a more simple and universal creed, and mingle, if it may be so said, the sense of immortality with all the feelings and opinions of mankind.

Its uni-
versality.

II. Nor was it to the different classes of the Jews alone, that the universal precepts of Christian morality expanded beyond the narrow and exclusive notions of the age and people. Jesus did not throw down the barrier which secluded the Jews from the rest of mankind, but he shook it to its base. Christian morality was not that of a sect, a race, or a nation, but of universal man: though necessarily delivered at times in Jewish language, couched under Jewish figures, and illustrated by local allusions, in its spirit it was diametrically opposite to Jewish. However it might make some provisions suited only to the peculiar state of the first disciples, yet in its essence, it may be said to be comprehensive as the human race, immutable as the nature of man. It had no political, no local no temporary precepts; it was, therefore, neither liable to be abrogated by any change in the condition of man, nor to fall into disuse, as belonging to a passed and obsolete state of civilisation. It may dwell within its proper kingdom, the heart of man, in every change of political relation—in the monarchy, the oligarchy, the republic. It may domesticate itself in any climate, amid the burning sands of Africa, or the frozen regions of the North; for it has no local centre, no temple, no Caaba, no essential ceremonies impracticable under any conceivable state of human existence. In fact it is, strictly speaking, no Law; it is no system of positive enactments; it is the establishment of certain principles, the enforcement of certain dispositions, the cultivation of a certain temper of mind, which the conscience is to apply to the ever-varying exigencies of time and place. This appears to me to be the distinctive peculiarity of Christian morals, a characteristic in itself most remarkable, and singularly so when we find this free and comprehensive system emanating from that of which the main-spring was its exclusiveness.

Its origi-
nal prin-
ciples.

III. The basis of this universality in Christian morals was the broad and original principles upon which it rested. If we were to glean from the later Jewish writings, from the beautiful aphorisms of other Oriental nations, which we cannot fairly trace to Christian sources, and from the Platonic and Stoic philosophy, their more striking precepts, we might find, perhaps, a counterpart to almost all the moral sayings of Jesus. But the same truth is of different importance as an unconnected aphorism, and as the groundwork of a complete system. No doubt the benevolence of the Creator had awakened grateful feelings, and kindled the most exquisite poetry of

expression in the hearts and from the lips of many before the coming of Christ; no doubt general humanity had been impressed upon mankind in the most vivid and earnest language. But the Gospel first placed these two great principles as the main pillars of the new moral structure : God the universal Father, mankind one brotherhood; God made known through the mediation of his Son, the image, and humanised type and exemplar of his goodness; mankind of one kindred, and therefore of equal rank in the sight of the Creator, and to be united in one spiritual commonwealth. Such were the great principles of Christian morals, shadowed forth at first, rather than distinctly announced, in condescension to the prejudices of the Jews, who, if they had been found worthy of appreciating the essential spirit of the new religion—if they had received Jesus as the promised Saviour—might have been collectively and nationally the religious parents and teachers of mankind.

Such was the singular position of Jesus with regard to his countrymen, the attempt to conciliate them to the new religion was to be fairly made; but the religion, however it might condescend to speak their language, could not forfeit or compromise, even for such an end, its primary and essential principles. Jesus therefore pursues his course, at one time paying the utmost deference, at another unavoidably offending the deep-rooted prejudices of the people. The inveterate and loathsome nature of the leprosy in Syria, the deep abhorrence with which the wretched victim of this disease was cast forth from all social fellowship, is well known to all who are even slightly acquainted with the Jewish law and usages. One of these miserable beings appealed, and not in vain, to the mercy of Jesus (1). He was instantaneously cured; but Jesus, whether to authenticate the cure, and to secure the readmission of the outcast into the rights and privileges of society from which he was legally excluded (2), or more probably lest he should be accused of interfering with the rights, or diminishing the dues of the priesthood, enjoined him to preserve the strictest secrecy concerning the cause of his cure; to submit to the regular examination of his case by the appointed authorities, and on no account to omit the customary offering. The second incident was remarkable for its publicity, as having taken place in a crowded house, in the midst of many of the scribes, who were, at this period at least, not friendly to Jesus (3). The door of the house being inaccessible on account of the crowd, the sick man was borne in his couch along the flat terrace roofs of

Conduct of Jesus with regard to his countrymen.

Healing the leper.

Second miracle.

(1) Matt. viii. 2—4; Mark, i. 40—45; Luke, v. 12—16.

I have retained what may be called the moral connection of this cure with the Sermon on the Mount; if the latter is inserted, as in St. Luke, after the more solemn inauguration of the Twelve, this incident will retain, perhaps, its present place, but lose this moral connection. See Luke, v. 12—15.

(2) I am inclined to adopt the explanation of Grotius, that “the testimony” was to be obtained from the priest, before he knew that he had been healed by Jesus, lest, in his jealousy, he should declare the cure imperfect.

(3) Matt. ix. 2—8. Mark, ii. 1—12. Luke, v. 18—26.

the adjacent buildings (for in the East the roofs are rarely pointed or shelving) and let down through an aperture, which was easily made, and of sufficient dimensions to admit the bed, into the upper chamber (1), where Jesus was seated in the midst of his hearers. Jesus complied at once with their request to cure the afflicted man, but made use of a new and remarkable expression, "Thy sins are forgiven thee," which, while it coincided with the general notion that such diseases were the penalties of sin, nevertheless as assuming an unprecedented power, that which seems to belong to the Deity alone, struck his hearers, more especially the better instructed, the scribes, with astonishment. Their wonder, however, at the instantaneous cure, for the present, overpowered their indignation, yet no doubt the whole transaction tended to increase the jealousy with which Jesus began to be beheld.

The publicans.

The third incident (2) jarred on a still more sensitive chord in the popular feeling. On no point were all orders among the Jews so unanimous as in their contempt and detestation of the publicans. Strictly speaking the persons named in the evangelists were not publicans. These were men of property, not below the equestrian order, who farmed the public revenues. Those in question were the agents of these contractors, men, often freed slaves, or of low birth and station, and throughout the Roman world proverbial for their extortions, and in Judæa still more hateful, as among the manifest signs of subjugation to a foreign dominion. The Jew who exercised the function of a publican was, as it were, a traitor to the national independence. One of these, Matthew, otherwise called Levi, was summoned from his post as collector, perhaps at the port of Capernaum, to become one of the most intimate followers of Jesus; and the general astonishment was still farther increased by Jesus entering familiarly into the house, and even partaking of food with men thus proscribed by the universal feeling; and though not legally unclean, yet no doubt held in even greater abhorrence by the general sentiment of the people.

Close of first year of public life.

Thus ended the first year of the public life of Jesus. The fame of his wonderful works, the authority with which he delivered his doctrines, among the meeker and more peaceful spirits the beauty of the doctrines themselves; above all the mystery which hung over his character and pretensions, had strongly excited the interest of the whole nation. From all quarters, from Galilee, Pææa, Judæa, and even the remoter Idæa, multitudes approached him with eager curiosity. On the other hand, his total secession from, or rather his avowed condemnation of, the great prevailing party, the Pharisees, while his doctrines seemed equally opposed to the less numerous yet rival Sadducaic faction; his popular demeanour,

(1) Or they may merely have enlarged the door of communication with the terrace roof.

(2) Matt. ix. 9.. Mark, ix. 13. 14.; Luke, v. 27, 28.

which had little in common with the ascetic mysticism of the Essenes; his independence of the ruling authorities; above all, notwithstanding his general deference for the law, his manifest assumption of a power above the law, had no doubt, if not actively arrayed against him, yet awakened to a secret and brooding animosity, the interests and the passions of the more powerful and influential throughout the country.

CHAPTER V.

SECOND YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS.

THE second year of the public life of Christ opened, as the first, with his attendance at the passover (1). He appeared again amidst the assembled population of the whole race of Israel, in the place where, by common consent, the real Messiah was to assume his office, and to claim the allegiance of the favoured and chosen people of God (2). It is clear that a considerable change had taken place in the popular sentiment, on the whole, at least with the ruling party, unfavourable to Jesus of Nazareth. The inquisitive wonder, not unmingled with respect, which on the former occasion seemed to have watched his words and actions, had turned to an unquiet and jealous vigilance, and a manifest anxiety on the part of his opponents to catch some opportunity of weakening his influence over the people. The misapprehended speech concerning the demolition and restoration of the temple probably rankled in the recollection of many; and rumours no doubt, and those most likely inaccurate and misrepresented, must have reached Jerusalem, of the mysterious language in which he had spoken of his relation to the Supreme Being. The mere fact that Galilee had been chosen, rather than Jerusalem or Judæa, for his assumption of whatever distinguished character he was about to support, would work, with no doubtful or disguised animosity, among the proud and jealous inhabitants of the metropolis. Nor was his conduct, however still cautious, without further inevitable collision with some of the most inveterate prejudices of his countrymen. The first year the only public demonstration of his superiority had been the expulsion of the buyers

v. v. 28.
Passover.
Jesus in
Jerusalem.

Change
in popular
sentiment.

(1) My language on this point is to be taken with some latitude, as a certain time elapsed between the baptism of Jesus and the first passover.

I adopt the opinion that the feast, in the 5th chapter of St. John (verse 1.), was a passover. This view is not without objection, namely, the long interval of nearly a whole year, which would be overleaped at once by the narrative of

St. John. But if this Gospel was intended to be generally supplementary to the rest, or, as it seems, intended especially to relate the transactions in Jerusalem, omitted by the other Evangelists, this total silence on the intermediate events in Galilee would not be altogether unaccountable.

(2) John, v. 1—15.

and sellers from the temple, and his ambiguous and misinterpreted speech about that sacred edifice. His conversation with Nicodemus had probably not transpired, or at least not gained general publicity; for the same motives which would lead the cautious Pharisee to conceal his visit under the veil of night, would induce him to keep within his own bosom the important and startling truths, which perhaps he himself did not yet clearly comprehend, but which at all events were so opposite to the principles of his sect, and so humiliating to the pride of the ruling and learned oligarchy.

Breach
of the
Sabbath,
Jewish
reverence
for the
Sabbath.

During his second visit, however, at the same solemn period of national assemblage, Jesus gave a new cause of astonishment to his followers, of offence to his adversaries, by an act which could not but excite the highest wonder and the strongest animadversion. This was no less than an assumption of authority to dispense with the observance of the Sabbath. Of all their institutes, which after having infringed or neglected for centuries of cold and faithless service, the Jews, on the return from the captivity, embraced with passionate and fanatical attachment, none had become so completely identified with the popular feeling, or had been guarded by such minute and multifarious provisions as the Sabbath. In the early days of the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus, the insurgents, having been surprised on a Sabbath, submitted to be tamely butchered, rather than violate the sanctity of the day even by defensive warfare. And though the manifest impossibility of recovering or maintaining their liberties against the inroads of hostile nations had led to a relaxation of the law as far as self-defence, yet during the siege of Jerusalem by Pompey, the wondering Romans discovered, that although on the seventh day the garrison would repel an assault, yet they would do nothing to prevent or molest the enemy in carrying on his operations in the trenches. Tradition, "the hedge of the law," as it was called, had fenced this institution with more than usual care: it had noted with jealous rigour almost every act of bodily exertion within the capacity of man, arranged them under thirty-nine heads, which were each considered to comprehend a multitude of subordinate cases, and against each and every one of these had solemnly affixed the seal of Divine condemnation. A Sabbath day's journey was a distance limited to 2,000 cubits, or rather less than a mile; and the carrying any burthen was especially denounced as among the most flagrant violations of the law. This sabbatic observance was the strong-hold of pharisaic rigour; and enslaved as the whole nation was in voluntary bondage to these minute regulations, in no point were they less inclined to struggle with the yoke, or wore it with greater willingness and pride.

There was a pool (1), situated most likely to the north of the

temple, near the sheep-gate, the same probably through which the animals intended for sacrifice were usually brought into the city. The place was called Beth-esda (the house of mercy), and the pool was supposed to possess remarkable properties for healing diseases. At certain periods there was a strong commotion in the waters, which probably bubbled up from some chemical cause connected with their medicinal effects. Popular belief, or rather perhaps popular language, attributed this agitation of the surface to the descent of an angel (1), for of course the regular descent of a celestial being, visible to the whole city, cannot for an instant be supposed. Around the pool were usually assembled a number of diseased persons, blind or paralytic, who awaited the right moment for plunging into the water, under the shelter of five porticoes, which had been built either by private charity, or at the public cost, for the general convenience. Among these lay one who had been notoriously afflicted for thirty-eight years by some disorder which deprived him of the use of his limbs (2). It was in vain that he had watched an opportunity of relief, for as the sick person who first plunged into the water, when it became agitated, seems to have exhausted its virtues, this helpless and friendless sufferer was constantly thrust aside, or supplanted by some more active rival for the salutary effects of the spring. Jesus saw and had compassion on the afflicted man, commanded him to rise, and, that he might show the perfect restoration of his strength, to take up the pallet on which he had lain, and to bear it away. The carrying any burthen, as has been said, was specifically named as one of the most heinous offences against the law; and the strange sight of a man thus openly violating the statute in so public a place, could not but excite the almost attention. The man was summoned, it should seem, before the appointed authorities, and questioned about his offence against public decency and the established law. His defence was plain and simple; he acted according to the command of the wonderful person who had restored his limbs with a word, but who that person was he had no knowledge; for immediately after the miraculous cure Jesus, in conformity with his usual practice of avoiding whatever might lead to popular tumult, had quietly withdrawn from the wondering crowd. Subsequently, however, meeting Jesus in the temple, he recognised his benefactor, and it became generally known that Jesus was both the author of the cure and of the violation of the Sabbath. Jesus in his turn was called to account for his conduct.

Healing of
the sick
man at the
pool of
Bethesda.

(1) The verse relating to the angel is rejected as spurious by many critics, and is wanting in some manuscripts. Perhaps it was silently rejected from a reluctance to depart from the literal interpretation; and, at the same time, the inevitable conviction that if taken literally the fact must have been notorious and visible to all who

visited Jerusalem. Grotius, Lightfoot, Doddridge, in loc.

(2) We are not of course to suppose, as is assumed by some of the mythic interpreters, that the man had been all this time waiting for a cure at this place.

Judicial
Investigation
of the
case.

Defence of
Jesus.

Second de-
fence of
Jesus.

The transaction bears the appearance, if not of a formal arraignment before the high court of the Sanhedrin, at least of a solemn and regular judicial inquiry. Yet as no verdict seems to have been given, notwithstanding the importance evidently attached to the affair, it may be supposed either that the full authority of the Sanhedrin was yet wanting, or that they dared not, on such insufficient evidence, condemn with severity one about whom the popular mind was at least divided. The defence of Jesus, though apparently not given at full length by the evangelist, was of a nature to startle and perplex the tribunal: it was full of mysterious intimations, and couched in language which it is difficult to decide how far it was familiar to the ears of the more learned. It appeared at once to strike at the literal interpretation of the Mosaic commandment, and at the same time to draw a parallel between the actions of Jesus and those of God (1). On the Sabbath the beneficent works of the Almighty Father are continued as on any other day; there is no period of rest to Him whose active power is continually employed in upholding, animating, maintaining in its uniform and interrupted course the universe which he has created. The free course of God's blessing knows no pause, no suspension (2). It is far from improbable that the healing waters of Bethesda occasionally showed their salutary virtues on the Sabbath, and might thus be an acknowledged instance of the unremitting benevolence of the Almighty. In the same manner the benevolence of Jesus disdained to be confined by any distinction of days; it was to flow forth as constant and unimpeded as the Divine bounty. The indignant court heard with astonishment this aggravation of the offence. Not only had Jesus assumed the power of dispensing with the law, but with what appeared to them profane and impious boldness, he had instituted a comparison between himself and the great ineffable Deity. With one consent they determine to press with greater vehemence the capital charge.

The second defence of Jesus is at once more full and explicit, and more alarming to the awe-struck assembly. It amounted to an open assumption of the title and offices of the Messiah, the Messiah in the person of the commanding and fearless, yet still, as they supposed, humble Galilean, who stood before their tribunal. It commenced by expanding and confirming that parallel, which had already sunk so deep into their minds. The Son was upon earth, as it were, a representative of the power and mercy of the invisible Father, of that great Being who had never been comprehensible to

(1) John, v. 16-47.

(2) If the sublime maxim which was admitted in the school of Alexandria had likewise found its way into the synagogues of Judea, the speech of Jesus (my Father worketh hitherto, and I work), in its first clause appealed to principles

acknowledged by his auditory. "God," says Philo, "never ceases from action, but as it is the property of fire to burn, of snow to chill, so to act (or to work), is the inalienable function of the Deity." De Alleg. lib. ii.

the senses of man. It proceeded to declare his divine mission and his claim to divine honour, his investment with power, not only over diseases but over death itself. From thence it passed to the acknowledged offices of the Messiah, the resurrection, the final judgment, the apportionment of everlasting life. All these recognised functions of the Messiah were assigned by the Father to the Son, and that Son appeared in his person. In confirmation of these as yet unheard of pretensions, Jesus declared that his right to honour and reverence rested not on his own assertion alone. He appealed to the testimony which had been publicly borne to his character by John the Baptist. The prophetic authority of John had been, if not universally, at least generally recognised; it had so completely sunk into the popular belief, that, as appears in a subsequent incident, the multitude would have resented any suspicion thrown even by their acknowledged superiors on one thus established in their respect and veneration, and perhaps further endeared by the persecution which he was now suffering under the unpopular tetrarch of Galilee. He appealed to a more decisive testimony, the public miracles which he had wrought, concerning which the rulers seem scarcely yet to have determined on their course, whether to doubt, to deny, or to ascribe them to diabolical agency. Finally he appealed to the last unanswerable authority, the sacred writings, which they held in such devout reverence; and distinctly asserted that his coming had been prefigured by their great lawgiver, from the spirit at least, if not from the express letter of whose sacred laws they were departing, in rejecting his claims to the title and honours of the Messiah. There is an air of conscious superiority in the whole of this address, which occasionally rises to the vehemence of reproof, to solemn expostulation, to authoritative admonition, of which it is difficult to estimate the impression upon a court accustomed to issue their judgments to a trembling and humiliated auditory. But of their subsequent proceedings we have no information, whether the Sanhedrin hesitated or feared to proceed; whether they were divided in their opinions, or could not reckon upon the support of the people; whether they doubted their own competency to take so strong a measure without the concurrence or sanction of the Roman governor—at all events no attempt was made to secure the person of Jesus. He appears, with his usual caution, to have retired towards the safer province of Galilee, where the Jewish senate possessed no authority, and where Herod, much less under the pharisaic influence, would not think it necessary to support the injured dignity of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem; nor whatever his political apprehensions, would he entertain the same sensitive terrors of a reformer who confined his views to the religious improvement of mankind.

Difficult
position of
the San-
hedrin.

But from this time commences the declared hostility of the pharisaic party against Jesus. Every opportunity is seized of detecting him in some further violation of the religious statutes. We now perpetually find the Pharisees watching his footsteps, and, especially on the Sabbath, laying hold of every pretext to inflame the popular mind against his neglect or open defiance of their observances. Nor was their jealous vigilance disappointed. Jesus calmly pursued on the Sabbath, as on every other day, his course of benevolence. A second and a third time, immediately after his public arraignment, that, which they considered the inexpiable offence, was renewed, and justified in terms which were still more repugnant to their inveterate prejudices. The passover was scarcely ended, and with his disciples he was probably travelling homewards, when the first of these incidents occurred. On the first Sabbath after the second day of unleavened bread, the disciples passing through a field of corn, and being hungry, plucked some of the ears of corn, and rubbing them in their hands, eat the grain (1). This, according to Jewish usage, was no violation of the laws of property, as after the wave-offering had been made in the temple, the harvest was considered to be ripe : and the humane regulation of the lawgiver permitted the stranger, who was passing through a remote district, thus to satisfy his immediate wants. But it was the Sabbath, and the act directly offended against another of the multifarious provisions of pharisaic tradition. The vindication of his followers by their master took still higher ground : it not merely adduced the example of David, who in extreme want had not scrupled, in open violation of the law, to take the shewbread, which was prohibited to all but the priestly order, and thus placed his humble disciples on a level with the great king, whose memory was cherished with the most devout reverence and pride ; but distinctly asserted his own power of dispensing with that which was considered the eternal, the irreversible commandment,—he declared himself Lord of the Sabbath. Rumours of this dangerous innovation accompanied him into Galilee. Whether some of the more zealous Pharisees had followed him during his journey, or had accidentally returned at the same time from the passover, or whether by means of that intimate and rapid correspondence, likely to be maintained among the members of an ambitious and spreading sect, they had already communicated their apprehensions of danger and their animosity against Jesus, they already seem to have arrayed against him in all parts the vigilance and enmity of their brethren. It was in the public synagogue in some town which he entered on his return to Galilee, in the face of the whole assembly, that a man with a withered hand recovered the strength of his limb

Hostility
of the
pharisaic
party.

They fol-
low him
into
Galilee.

New viola-
tion of the
Sabbath.

(1) Matt. xii. 1-8. Mark, ii. 23-28. Luk. vi. 1-5.

at the commandment of Jesus on the Sabbath day (1). And the multitude, instead of being inflamed by the zeal of the Pharisees, appear at least to have been unmoved by their angry remonstrances. They heard without disapprobation, if they did not openly testify their admiration, both of the power and goodness of Jesus; and listened to the simple argument with which he silenced his adversaries, by appealing to their own practice in extricating their own property, or delivering their own cattle from jeopardy, on the sacred day (2).

The discomfited Pharisees endeavoured to enlist in their party the followers, perhaps the magistracy of Herod, and to organise a formidable opposition to the growing influence of Jesus. So successful was their hostility, that Jesus seems to have thought it prudent to withdraw for a short time from the collision. He passed towards the lake, over which he could at any time cross into the district which was beyond the authority both of Herod and of the Jewish Sanhedrin (3). A bark attended upon him, which might transport him to any quarter he might desire, and on board of which he seems to have avoided the multitudes, which constantly thronged around, or seated on the deck addressed, with greater convenience, the crowding hearers who lined the shores. Yet concealment, or at least less frequent publicity, seems now to have been his object (4), for when some of those insane persons, the *demoniaes* as they were called, openly address him by the title of Son of God, Jesus enjoins their silence (5), as though he were yet unwilling openly to assume this title, which was fully equivalent to that of the Messiah; and which, no doubt, was already ascribed to him by the bolder and less prudent of his followers. The same injunctions of secrecy were addressed to others, who at this time were relieved or cured by his beneficent power; so that one evangelist considers that the cautious and unresisting demeanour of Jesus, thus avoiding all unnecessary offence or irritation, exemplified that characteristic of the Messiah, so beautifully described by Isaiah (6), “He shall neither strive nor cry, neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.”

This persecution, however, continues but a short time, and Jesus appears again openly in Capernaum and its neighbourhood. After a night passed in solitary retirement, he takes the decided step of organising his followers, selecting and solemnly inaugurating a certain number of his more immediate disciples, who were to receive an authoritative commission to disseminate his doctrines (7).

Jesus withdraws beyond the sea of Galilee.

Jesus retires from public view.

Re-appears at Capernaum.

Organisation of his followers

(1) Mat. xii. 9—14.; Mark, iii. 1—6.; Luke. vi. 6—11.

(2) Matt. xii. 15. 21.. Mark, iii. 7—12.

(3) Mark, iii. 7

(4) Matt. xii. 16.

(5) Mark, iii. 11—12.

(6) Matt. xii. 19, 20.

(7) Mark, iii. 13—19. Luke, vi. 12—19

The
twelve
apostles.

Hitherto he had stood, as it were, alone : though doubtless some of his followers had attended upon him with greater zeal and assiduity than others, yet he could scarcely be considered as the head of a regular and disciplined community. The twelve apostles, whether selected with that view, could not but call to mind the number of the tribes of Israel. Of the earlier lives of these humble men little can be gathered beyond the usual avocations of some among them ; and even tradition, for once, preserves a modest and almost total silence. They were of the lower, though perhaps not quite the lowest, class of Galilean peasants. What previous education they had received we can scarcely conjecture ; though almost all the Jews appear to have received some kind of instruction in the history, the religion, and the traditions of the nation. First among the twelve appears Simon, to whom Jesus, in allusion to the firmness of character which he was hereafter to exhibit, gave a name, or rather, perhaps, interpreted a name by which he was already known, Cephaz (1), the Rock ; and declared that his new religious community was to rest on a foundation as solid as that name seemed to signify. Andrew his brother is usually associated with Peter. James and John (2) received the remarkable name of Boanerges, the Sons of Thunder, of which it is not easy to trace the exact force ; for those who bore it do not appear remarkable among their brethren, either for energy or vehemence : the peculiar gentleness of the latter, both in character and in the style of his writings, would lead us to doubt the correctness of the interpretation generally assigned to the appellation. The two former were natives of one town, Bethsaida, the latter, either of Bethsaida or Capernaum, and obtained their livelihood as fishermen on the lake of Gennesareth, the waters of which were extraordinarily prolific in fish of many kinds. Matthew or Levi, as it has been said, was a publican. Philip was likewise of Bethsaida ; Bartholomew, the son of Tolmai or Ptolemy, is generally considered to have been the same with Nathaniel, and was distinguished, before his knowledge of Jesus, by the blamelessness of his character, and, from the respect in which he was held, may be supposed to have been of higher reputation as of a better instructed class. Thomas or Didymus, (for the Syriac and Greek words have the same signification,) a twin, is remarkable in the subsequent history for his coolness and reflecting temper of mind. Lebbeus, or Thaddeus, or Judas, the brother of James, are doubtless the same persons ; Judas in Syriac is Thaddai. Whether

(1) The equivocal meaning of the word was, no doubt, evident in the original Aramaic dialect, spoken in Galilee. The French alone, of modern languages, exactly retains it. " Vous êtes Pierre, et sur cette pierre." The narrative of St. John ascribes the giving this appellation to an earlier period. See *supra*, p. 85.

(2) John must have been extremely young when chosen as an apostle, there is so constant

a tradition of his being alive at a late period in the first century, that the fact can scarcely be doubted. Jerome may perhaps have overstrained the tradition " ut autem sciamus Johannem tum fuisse puerum, cum a Jesu electus est, manifestissime docent ecclesiasticæ historiæ, quod usque ad Trajani vixerit imperium." Hieronymus in Journ. i. 1.

Lebbaïos is derived from the town of Lebba, on the sea-coast of Galilee, or from a word denoting the heart, and therefore almost synonymous with Thaddai, which is interpreted the breast, is extremely doubtful. James, the son of Cleophas or Alpheus, concerning whom and his relationship to Jesus there has been much dispute. His father Cleophas was married to another Mary, sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, to whom he would therefore be cousin-German. But whether he is the same with the James, who in other places is named the brother of the Lord, the term of brother by Jewish usage, according to one opinion, comprehending these closer ties of kindred; and whether either of these two, or which, was the James who presided over the Christian community in Jerusalem, and whose cruel death is described by Josephus, must remain among those questions on which we can scarcely expect further information, and cannot therefore decide with certainty. Simon the Canaanite was so called, not, as has been supposed, from the town of Cana, still less from his Canaanitish descent, but from a Hebrew word meaning a zealot, to which fanatical and dangerous body this apostle had probably belonged, before he joined the more peaceful disciples of Jesus. The last was Judas Iscariot, perhaps so named from a small village named Iscara, or more probably Carioth, a town in the tribe of Judah.

It was after the regular inauguration of the twelve in their apostolic office, that, according to St. Luke, the Sermon on the Mount was delivered, or some second outline of Christian morals repeated in nearly similar terms. Immediately after, as Jesus returned to Capernaum, a cure was wrought, both from its circumstances and its probable influence on the situation of Jesus, highly worthy of remark (1). It was in favour of a centurion, a military officer of Galilean descent, probably in the service of Herod, and a proselyte to Judaism, for he could scarcely have built a synagogue for Jewish worship, unless a convert to the religion. (2). This man was held in such high estimation that the Jewish elders of the city, likewise it should seem not unfavourably disposed towards Jesus, interceded in his behalf. The man himself appears to have held the new teacher in such profound reverence, that in his humility he did not think his house worthy of so illustrious a guest, and expressed his confidence that a word from him would be as effective, even uttered at a distance, as the orders that he was accustomed to issue to his soldiery. Jesus not only complied with his request by restoring his servant to health, but took the opportunity of declaring that many Gentiles, from the most remote quarters, would be admitted within the pale of the new religion, to the exclusion of many who had no

Healing
of the
centu-
rion's ser-
vant.

(1) St. Matthew as well as St. Luke places this cure as immediately following the Sermon on the Mount.

(2) Matt. viii. 5—13; Luke, vii. 1—10.

title but their descent from Abraham. Still there was nothing, at least in the earlier part of this declaration, directly contrary to the established opinions ; for at least the more liberal Jews were not unwilling to entertain the splendid ambition of becoming the religious instructors of the world, provided the world did homage to the excellence and divine institution of the Law ; and at all times the Gentiles, by becoming Jews, either as proselytes of the gate, if not proselytes by circumcision, might share in most, if not in all, the privileges of the chosen people. This incident was likewise of importance as still further strengthening the interest of Jesus with the ruling authorities and with another powerful officer in the town of Capernaum. A more extraordinary transaction followed. As yet Jesus had claimed authority over the most distressing and obstinate maladies, he now appeared invested with power over death itself.

Raising
the wi-
dow's son.

As he entered the town of Nain, between twenty and thirty miles from Capernaum, he met a funeral procession, accompanied with circumstances of extreme distress. It was a youth, the only son of a widow, who was borne out to burial ; so great was the calamity that it had excited the general interest of the inhabitants. Jesus raises the youth from his bier, and restores him to the destitute mother (1).

Me sage of
John the
Baptist.

The fame of this unprecedented miracle was propagated with the utmost rapidity through the country ; and still vague, yet deepening, rumours that a prophet had appeared ; that the great event which held the whole nation in suspense was on the instant of fulfilment, spread throughout the whole province. It even reached the remote fortress of Machærus, in which John was still closely guarded, though it seems the free access of his followers was not prohibited (2). John commissioned two of his disciples to inquire into the truth of these wonderful reports, and to demand of Jesus himself, "whether he was the expected Messiah. But what was the design of John in this message to Jesus ? The question is not without difficulty. Was it for the satisfaction of his own doubts, or those of his followers (3) ? Was it that, in apprehension of his approaching death, he would consign his disciples to the care of a still greater instructor ? Was it that he might attach them before his death to Jesus, and familiarise them with conduct, in some respects, so opposite to his own Essenian, if not Pharisaic, habits ? He might foresee the advantage that would be taken by the more ascetic to alienate his followers from Jesus, as a teacher who fell far below the austerity of their own ; and who, accessible to all, held in no respect those minute observances which the usage of the stricter Jews, and the example of their master, had arrayed in indispensable sanctity. Or was it that John himself, having languished for nearly a year in his remote prison, began to be impatient for the

(1) Luke, vii. 11—18.

(2) Matt. xi. 2, 30.; Luke, vii. 17—33.

(3) Whitley, Doddridge, in loc.

commencement of that splendid epoch (1), of which the whole nation, even the apostles of Jesus, both before and after the resurrection, had by no means abandoned their glorious, worldly, and Jewish notions? Was John, like the rest of the people, not yet exalted above those hopes which were inseparable from the national mind? If he is the king, why does he hesitate to assume his kingdom? If the Deliverer, why so tardy to commence the deliverance? "If thou art indeed the Messiah (such may appear to have been the purport of the Baptist's message), proclaim thyself at once; assume thy state; array thyself in majesty; discomfit the enemies of holiness and of God! My prison doors will at once burst open; my trembling persecutors will cease from their oppressions. Herod himself will yield up his usurped authority; and even the power of Rome will cease to afflict the redeemed people of the Almighty?" What, on the other hand, is the answer of Jesus? It harmonises in a remarkable manner with this latter view. It declares at once, and to the disappointment of these temporal hopes, the purely moral and religious nature of the dominion to be established by the Messiah. He was found displaying manifest signs of more than human power, and to these peaceful signs he appeals as the conclusive evidence of the commencement of the Messiah's kingdom, the relief of diseases, the cessation of sorrows, the restoration of their lost or decayed senses to the deaf or blind, the equal admission of the lowest orders to the same religious privileges with those more especially favoured by God. The remarkable words are added, "Blessed is he that shall not be offended in me;" he that shall not consider irreconcilable with the splendid promises of the Messiah's kingdom, my lowly condition, my calm and unassuming course of mercy and love to mankind, my total disregard of worldly honours, my refusal to place myself at the head of the people as a temporal ruler. Violent men, more especially during the disturbed and excited period since the appearance of John the Baptist, would urge on a kingdom of violence. How truly the character of the times is thus described, is apparent from the single fact, that shortly afterwards the people would have seized Jesus himself and forced him to assume the royal title, if he had not withdrawn himself from his dangerous adherents. This last expression, however, occurs in the subsequent discourse of Jesus, after his disciples had departed, when in those striking images he spoke of the former concourse of the people to the Baptist, and justified it by the assertion of his prophetic character. It was no idle object which led them into the wilderness, to see, as it were, "a reed shaken by the wind;" nor to behold any rich or luxurious object—for such they would have gone to the courts of their sovereigns. Still he declares the meanest of his own disciples

(1) Hammond inclines to this view, *adversus Joann. Discourses on the Truth of the Christian Religion.*

to have attained some moral superiority, some knowledge, probably, of the real nature of the new religion, and the character and designs of the Messiah, which had never been possessed by John. With his usual rapidity of transition, Jesus passes at once to his moral instruction, and vividly shows, that whether severe or gentle, whether more ascetic or more popular, the teachers of a holier faith had been equally unacceptable. The general multitude of the Jews had rejected both the austerer Baptist, and himself though of so much more benign and engaging demeanour. The whole discourse ends with the significant words, "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Contrast
between
Jesus and
John the
Baptist.

Nothing, indeed, could offer a more striking contrast to the secluded and eremitical life of John, than the easy and accessible manner with which Jesus mingled with all classes, even with his bitterest opponents, the Pharisees. He accepts the invitation of one of these, and enters into his house to partake of refreshment (1). Here a woman of dissolute life found her way into the chamber where the feast was held; she sat at his feet, anointing him, according to Eastern usage, with a costly unguent, which was contained in a box of alabaster; she wept bitterly, and with her long locks wiped away the falling tears. The Pharisees, who shrunk not only from the contact, but even from the approach, of all whom they considered physically or morally unclean, could only attribute the conduct of Jesus to his ignorance of her real character. The reply of Jesus intimates that his religion was intended to reform and purify the worst, and that some of his most sincere and ardent believers might proceed from those very outcasts of society from whom pharisaic rigour shrunk with abhorrence.

After this Jesus appears to have made another circuit through the towns and villages of Galilee. On his return to Capernaum, instigated, perhaps, by his adversaries, some of his relatives appear to have believed, or pretended to believe, that he was out of his senses; and, therefore, attempted to secure his person. This scheme failing, the pharisaic party, who had been deputed, it should seem, from Jerusalem to watch his conduct, endeavour to avail themselves of that great principle of Jewish superstition, the belief in the power of evil spirits, to invalidate his growing authority (2). On the occasion of the cure of one of those lunatics, usually called *dæmoniācs* (3), who

(1) Luke, vii. 36—50. Luke, xi. 14—26.

(2) Matt. xii. 22—45.; Mark, iii. 19—30.

(3) I have no scruple in avowing my opinion on the subject of the *dæmoniācs* to be that of Joseph Mede, Lardner, Dr. Mead, Paley, and all the learned modern writers. It was a kind of insanity, not unlikely to be prevalent among a people peculiarly subject to leprosy and other cutaneous diseases; and nothing was more probable than that lunacy should take the turn and speak the language of the prevailing superstition of the times. As the belief in witchcraft made

people fancy themselves witches, so the belief in possession made men of distempered minds fancy themselves possessed. The present case, indeed, seems to have been one rather of infirmity than lunacy: the afflicted person was blind and dumb; but such cases were equally ascribed to malignant spirits. There is one very strong reason, which I do not remember to have seen urged with sufficient force, but which may have contributed to induce Jesus to adopt the current language on this point. The disbelief in these spiritual influences was one of the characteristic

was both dumb and blind, they accused him of unlawful dealings with the spirits of evil. It was by a magic influence obtained by a secret contract with Beelzebub, the chief of the powers of darkness, or by secretly invoking his all-powerful name, that he reduced the subordinate dæmons to obedience. The answer of Jesus struck them with confusion. Evil spirits, according to their own creed, took delight in the miseries and crimes of men; his acts were those of the purest benevolence: how gross the inconsistency to suppose that malignant spirits would thus lend themselves to the cause of human happiness and virtue. Another more personal argument still farther confounded his adversaries. The Pharisees were professed exorcists (1); if, then, exorcism, or the ejection of these evil spirits, necessarily implied unlawful dealings with the world of darkness, they were as open to the charge as he whom they accused. They had, therefore, the alternative of renouncing their own pretensions, or of admitting that those of Jesus were to be judged on other principles. It was, then, blasphemy against the spirit of God to ascribe acts which bore the manifest impress of the divine goodness in their essentially beneficent character, to any other source but the Father of Mercies; it was an offence which argued such total obtuseness of moral perception, such utter incapacity of feeling or comprehending the beauty either of the conduct or the doctrines of Jesus, as to leave no hope that they would ever be reclaimed from their rancorous hostility to his religion, or be qualified for admission into the pale and to the benefits of the new faith.

Dæm.
incs.

The discomfited pharisees now demand a more public and undeniable sign of his Messiahship (2), which alone could justify the lofty tone assumed by Jesus. A second time Jesus obscurely alludes to the one great future sign of the new faith—his resurrection; and, refusing further to gratify their curiosity, he reverts, in language of more than usual energy, to the incapacity of the age and nation to discern the real and intrinsic superiority of his religion.

Pharise
deman
sign

The followers of Jesus had now been organised into a regular sect or party. Another incident distinctly showed that he no longer

tenets of the unpopular sect of the sadducees. A departure from the common language, or the endeavour to correct this inveterate error, would have raised an immediate outcry against him from his watchful and malignant adversaries, as an unbelieving sadducee. Josephus mentions a certain herb which had the power of expelling demons, a fact which intimates that it was a bodily disease. Kuinoel, in Matt. iv. 24., refers to the latter fact, shows that in Greek authors, especially Hippocrates, madness and demoniacal possession are the same; and quotes the various passages in the New Testament where the same language is evidently held; as, among many others, John, x. 20.; Matt. xvii. 15.; Mark, v. 15. I have again the satisfaction of finding myself to have arrived at the same conclusion as Neander.

(1) The rebuking subordinate demons, by the invocation of a more powerful name, is a very

ancient and common form of superstition. The later anti-Christian writers among the Jews attribute the power of Jesus over evil spirits to his having obtained this secret, and dared to utter the ineffable name "the Sen-han-phorash." To this same wonderful powers over the whole invisible world are attributed by the Jewish Alex. writers, Artapanus and Ezekiel, the tragedian; it is not impossible that the more superstitious pharisees may have hoped to reduce Jesus to the dilemma either of confessing that he invoked the name of the prince of the demons, or secretly uttered that, which it was still more criminal to make use of for such a purpose, the mysterious and unspeakable Tetragrammaton. See Eisenmenger, i. 154. According to Josephus the art of exorcism descended from king Solomon. Antiq. viii. 2.

(2) Matt. xii. 38—45.

Conduct
of Jesus to
his rela-
tives.

Parables.

Rebukes
the storm.

Destruc-
tion of the
swine.

stood alone; even the social duties, which up to this time he had, no doubt, discharged with the utmost affection, were to give place to the sublimer objects of his mission. While he sat encircled by the multitude of his disciples, tidings were brought that his mother and his brethren desired to approach him (1). But Jesus refused to break off his occupation; he declared himself connected by a closer tie even than that of blood, with the great moral family of which he was to be the parent, and with which he was to stand in the most intimate relation. He was the chief of a fraternity not connected by common descent or consanguinity, but by a purely moral and religious bond; not by any national or local union, but bound together by the one strong but indivisible link of their common faith. On the increase, the future prospects, the final destiny of this community, his discourses now dwell, with frequent but obscure allusions (2). His language more constantly assumes the form of parable. Nor was this merely in compliance with the genius of an Eastern people, in order to convey his instruction in a form more attractive, and therefore both more immediately and more permanently impressive; or by awakening the imagination, to stamp his doctrines more deeply on the memory, and to incorporate them with the feelings. These short and lively apologues were admirably adapted to suggest the first rudiments of truths which it was not expedient openly to announce. Though some of the parables have a purely moral purport, the greater part delivered at this period bear a more or less covert relation to the character and growth of the new religion; a subject which, avowed without disguise, would have revolted the popular mind, and clashed too directly with their inveterate nationality. Yet these splendid, though obscure, anticipations singularly contrast with occasional allusions to his own personal destitution, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head (3)". For with the growth and organisation of his followers he seems fully aware that his dangers increase; he now frequently changes his place, passes from one side of the lake to the other, and even endeavours to throw a temporary concealment over some of his most extraordinary miracles. During one of these expeditions across the lake, he is in danger from one of those sudden and violent tempests which often disturb inland seas, particularly in mountainous districts. He rebukes the storm and it ceases. On the other side of the lake, in the district of Gadara, occurs the remarkable scene of the dæmoniacs among the tombs, and the herd of swine; the only act in the whole life of Jesus in the least repugnant to the uniform gentleness of his disposition, which would shrink from the unneces-

(1) Matt. xii. 46—49.; Mark, iii. 31—35.

(3) Matt. viii. 18—27.; Mark, iv. 35—41.;

(2) Matt. xiii.; Mark, iv. 1—34.; Luke, viii. 1—18. Luke, viii. 22—25.

sary destruction even of the meanest and most loathsome animals (1). On his return from this expedition to Capernaum took place the healing of the woman with the issue of the blood, and the raising of Jairus's daughter (2). Concerning the latter, as likewise concerning the relief of two blind men (3), he gives the strongest injunctions of secrecy, which, nevertheless, the active zeal of his partisans seems by no means to have regarded.

But a more decisive step was now taken than the organisation of the new religious community. The twelve apostles were sent out to disseminate the doctrines of Jesus throughout the whole of Galilee (4). They were invested with the power of healing diseases ; with cautious deference to Jewish feeling, they were forbidden to proceed beyond the borders of the Holy Land, either among the Gentiles or the heretical Samaritans ; they were to depend on the hospitality of those whom they might address for their subsistence ; and he distinctly anticipates the enmity which they would perpetually encounter, and the dissension which would be caused, even in the bosom of families, by the appearance of men thus acting on a commission unprecedented and unrecognised by the religious authorities of the nation, yet whose doctrines were of such intrinsic beauty, and so full of exciting promise.

The apostles sent out.

It was most likely this open proclamation, as it were, of the rise of a new and organised community ; and the greater publicity which this simultaneous appearance of two of its delegates in the different towns of Galilee could not but give to the growing influence of Jesus, that first attracted the notice of the government. Up to this period Jesus, as a remarkable individual, must have been well known by general report ; by this measure he stood in a very different character, as the chief of a numerous fraternity. There were other reasons, at this critical period, to excite the apprehensions and jealousy of Herod. During the short interval between the visit of John's disciples to Jesus and the present time, the Tetrarch had at length, at the instigation of his wife, perpetrated the murder of the Baptist. Whether his reluctance to shed unnecessary blood, or his prudence, had as yet shrunk from this crime, the condemnation of her marriage could not but rankle in the heart of the wife. The desire of revenge would be strengthened by a feeling of insecurity, and an apprehension of the precariousness of an union, declared, on such revered authority, null and void. As long as this stern and respected censor lived, her influence over her husband, the bond of marriage itself, might, in an hour of passion or remorse, be dissol-

Conduct of Herod.

Death of John the Baptist.

(1) The moral difficulty of this transaction has always appeared to me greater than that of conciling it with the more rational view of manichæism. Both are much diminished, if not entirely removed, by the theory of Kuinoel, who attributes to the lunatics the whole of the conversation with Jesus, and supposes that their

driving the herd of swine down the precipice was the last paroxysm in which their insanity exhausted itself. Matt. viii. 28—34.; Mark, v. 1—20.; Luke, viii. 26—39.

(2) Luke, viii. 40—56.

(3) Matt. xx. 27—31.

(4) Matt. x.; Mark, vi. 7—13.; Luke, ix. 1—6

ved. The common crime would cement still closer, perhaps for ever, their common interests. The artifices of Herodias, who did not scruple to make use of the beauty and grace of her daughter to compass her end, had extorted from the reluctant king, in the hour of festive carelessness—the celebration of Herod's birthday—the royal promise, which, whether for good or for evil, was equally irrevocable (1). The head of John the Baptist was the reward for the dancing of the daughter of Herodias (2). Whether the mind of Herod, like that of his father (3), was disordered by his crime, and the disgrace and discomfiture of his arms contributed to his moody terrors; or whether some popular rumour of the re-appearance of John, and that Jesus was the murdered prophet restored to life, had obtained currency; indications of hostility from the government seem to have put Jesus upon his guard (4). For no sooner had he been rejoined by the Apostles, than he withdrew into the desert country about Bethsaida, with the prudence which he now thought fit to assume, avoiding any sudden collision with the desperation or the capricious violence of the Tetrarch.

Jesus with-
draws
from Ga-
lilee.

The multi-
tudes fed
in the de-
sert.

But he now filled too important a place in the public mind to remain concealed so near his customary residence, and the scene of his extraordinary actions. The multitude thronged forth to trace his footsteps, so that five thousand persons had pre-occupied the place of his retreat; and so completely were they possessed by profound religious enthusiasm, as entirely to have forgotten the difficulty of obtaining provisions in that desolate region. The manner in which their wants were preternaturally supplied, and the whole assemblage fed by five loaves and two small fishes, wound up at once the rising enthusiasm to the highest pitch. It could not but call to the mind of the multitude the memorable event in their annals, the feeding the whole nation in the desert by the multiplication of the manna (5). Jesus then would no longer confine himself to those private and more unimposing acts of beneficence, of which the actual advantage was limited to a single object, and the ocular evidence of the fact to but few witnesses. Here was a sign performed in the presence of many thousands, who had actually participated in the miraculous food. This then, they supposed, could not but be the long-desired commencement of his more public, more national, career. Behold a second Moses! behold a Leader of the people, under whom they could never be afflicted with want! behold at length the Prophet, under whose government the people

(1) Matt. xiv. 1—12.; Mark, vi. 14—29; Luke, ix. 7—9.

(2) Josephus places the scene of this event in Machabrus. Machabrus would remove the prison of John to Tiberias. But the circumstances of the war may have caused the court to be held in this strong frontier town, and the feast may have been intended chiefly for the army, the "Chiliarchs" of St. Mark.

(3) According to Josephus the Jews ascribed the discomfiture of Herod's army by Aretas, king of Arabia, to the wrath of Heaven for the murder of John.

(4) Matt. xiv. 13, 14.; Mark, vi. 30—34.; Luke, ix. 10, 11.; John, vi. 1, 2.

(5) Matt. xiv. 15—22; Mark, vi. 35—45.; Luke, ix. 12—17.; John, vi. 3—14.

were to enjoy, among the other blessings of the Messiah's reign, unexampled, uninterrupted plenty (1).

Their acclamations clearly betrayed their intentions ; they would brook no longer delay ; they would force him to assume the royal title ; they would proclaim him, whether consenting or not, the king of Israel (2). Jesus withdrew from the midst of the dangerous tumult, and till the next day they sought him in vain. On their return to Capernaum, they found that he had crossed the lake, and entered the city the evening before. Their suspense, no doubt, had not been allayed by his mysterious disappearance on the other side of the lake. The circumstances under which he had passed over (3), if communicated by the Apostles to the wondering multitude (and unless positively prohibited by their master, they could not have kept silence on so wonderful an occurrence) would inflame still farther the intense popular agitation. While the Apostles were passing the lake in their boat, Jesus had appeared by their side, walking upon the waters.

Enthusiasm of the people

When therefore Jesus entered the synagogue of Capernaum, no doubt the crisis was immediately expected : at length he will avow himself ; the declaration of his dignity must now be made ; and where with such propriety as in the place of the public worship, in the midst of the devout and adoring people (4). The calm, the purely religious language of Jesus was a death-blow to these high-strung hopes. The object of his mission, he declared in explicit terms, was not to confer temporal benefits ; they were not to follow him with the hope that they would obtain without labour the fruits of the earth, or be secured against thirst and hunger—these were mere casual and incidental blessings (5). The real design of the new religion was the improvement of the moral and spiritual condition of man, described under the strong but not unusual figure of nourishment administered to the soul. During the whole of his address, or rather his conversation with the different parties, the popular opinion was in a state of fluctuation ; or, as is probable, there were two distinct parties, that of the populace, at first more favourable to Jesus ; and that of the Jewish leaders, who were altogether hostile. The former appear more humbly to have inquired what was demanded by the new Teacher in order to please God : of them

Jesus in the synagogue of Capernaum.

(1) He made manna to descend for them, in which were all manner of tastes ; and every Israelite found in it what his palate was chiefly pleased with. If he desired fat in it, he had it. In it the young men tasted bread, the old men, honey ; and the children, oil. So it shall be in the world to come (the days of the messias) ; he shall give Israel peace, and they shall sit down and eat in the garden of Eden, all nations shall behold their condition ; as it is said, " Behold my servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry." Isaiah, lxx. Rambam in Sanhed. cap. 10.

Matt. affirm that the hope of Israel is, that

Messiah shall come and raise the dead ; and they shall be gathered together in the garden of Eden, and shall eat and drink, and satiate themselves all the days of the world... ; and that there are houses built all of precious stones, beds of silk, and rivers flowing with wine and spicy oil. Shemoth Rabba, sect. 25.; Lightfoot in loc. vol. xii. 292.

(2) John, vi. 15.

(3) Matt. xiv. 24—33.; Mark, vi. 47—53.; John, vi. 16—21.

(4) John, vi. 22—71.

(5) Ibid. 26—29.

Jesus required faith in the Messiah. The latter first demanded a new sign (1), but broke out into murmurs of disapprobation when "the carpenter's son" began in his mysterious language to speak of his descent, his commission, from his Father, his re-ascension to his former intimate communion with the Deity; still more when he seemed to confine the hope of everlasting life to those only who were fitted to receive it; to those whose souls would receive the inward nutriment of his doctrines. No word in the whole address fell in with their excited, their passionate hopes: however dark, however ambiguous his allusions, they could not warp or misinterpret them into the confirmation of their splendid views. Not only did they appear to discountenance the immediate, they gave no warrant to the remote, accomplishment of their visions of the Messiah's earthly power and glory (2). At all events the disappointment was universal; his own adherents, baffled and sinking at once from their exalted hopes, cast off their unambitious, their inexplicable Leader; and so complete appears to have been the desertion, that Jesus demanded of the Twelve, whether they too would abandon his cause, and leave him to his fate. In the name of the Apostles Peter replied, that they had still full confidence in his doctrines, as teaching the way to eternal life; they still believed him to be the promised Messiah, the son of God. Jesus received this protestation of fidelity with apparent approbation, but intimated that the time would come, when one even of the tried and chosen Twelve would prove a traitor (3).

Thus the public life of Jesus closed its second year. On one side endangered by the zeal of the violent, on the other enfeebled by the desertion of so many of his followers, Jesus, so long as he spoke the current language about the Messiah, might be instantly taken

(1) John, vi. 30.

(2) There is some difficulty in placing the conversation with the Pharisees, (Matt. xv. 1—20.; Mark, vii. 1—23.), whether before or after the retreat of Jesus to the more remote district. The incident, though characteristic, is not of great importance, and seems rather to have been a private inquiry of certain members of the sect, than the public appeal of persons deputed for that purpose.

(3) The wavering and uncertainty of the Apostles, and still more of the people, concerning the Messiahship of Jesus is urged by Strauss as an argument for the later invention and inconsistency of the Gospels. It has always appeared to me one of those marks of true nature and of inartificial composition, which would lead me to a conclusion directly opposite. The first intimation of the deference and homage shown to him by John at his baptism, grows at once into a welcome rumour that the Christ has appeared. Andrew imparts the joyful tidings to his brother. "We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ;" so Philip, verse 46. But though Jesus, in one part of the Sermon on the Mount speaks of himself as the future judge, in general his distinct assumption of that character is exclusively to individuals in pri-

vate, to the Samaritan woman (John, iv. 26—42), and in more ambiguous language, perhaps, in his private examination before the authorities in Jerusalem (John, v. 46.). Still the manner in which he assumed the title, and asserted his claims, was so totally opposite to Jewish expectation; he appeared to delay so long the open declaration of his Messiahship, that the populace constantly fluctuated in their opinion, now ready by force to make him a king (John, vi. 15.), immediately after this altogether deserting him, so that even the Apostles' faith is severely tried (Compare with John, vi. 69.; Luke, ix. 20., Matt. xvi. 16., Mark, viii. 29., where it appears that rumours had become prevalent that though not the Messiah, he was either a prophet or a forerunner of the Messiah.) The real test of the fidelity of the Apostles was their adherence, under all the fluctuation of popular opinion, to this conviction, which at last, however, was shaken by that which most completely clashed with their pre-conceived notions of the Messiah, his ignominious death, and undisturbed burial.

As a corrective to Strauss on this point, I would recommend the work of one who will not be suspected of loose and inaccurate reasoning—Locke on the Reasonableness of Christianity

at his word; and against his will be set at the head of a daring insurrection; immediately that he departed from it, and rose to the sublimer tone of a purely religious teacher, he excited the most violent animosity even among many of his most ardent adherents. Thus his influence at one moment was apparently most extensive, at the next was confined to but a small circle. Still however it held the general mind in unallayed suspense; and the ardent admiration, the attachment of the few, who were enabled to appreciate his character, and the animosity of the many, who trembled at his progress, bore testimony to the commanding character and the surprising works of Jesus of Nazareth.

CHAPTER VI.

THIRD YEAR OF THE PUBLIC LIFE OF JESUS.

THE third Passover had now arrived since Jesus of Nazareth had appeared as a public Teacher, but, as it should seem, "his appointed hour" was not yet come; and, instead of descending with the general concourse of the whole nation to the capital, he remains in Galilee, or rather retires to the remotest extremity of the country; and though he approaches nearer to the northern shore of the lake, never ventures down into the populous region in which he more usually fixed his residence. The avowed hostility of the Jews, and their determination to put him to death; the apparently growing jealousy of Herod, and the desertion of his cause, on one hand, by a great number of his Galilean followers, who had taken offence at his speech in the synagogue of Capernaum, with the rash and intemperate zeal of others who were prepared to force him to assume the royal title, would render his presence at Jerusalem, if not absolutely necessary for his designs, both dangerous and inexpedient (1). But his absence from this Passover is still more remarkable, if, as appears highly probable, it was at this feast that the event occurred which is alluded to in St. Luke (2) as of general notoriety, and at a later period, was the subject of a conversation between Jesus and his disciples, the slaughter of certain Galileans in the Temple of Jerusalem by the Roman governor (3). The reasons for assigning this fact to the period of the third Passover appear to have considerable weight. Though at all times of the year the Temple was open, not merely for the regular morning and

Passover
Massacre
of the Ga-
lileans at
the Pass-
over.

(1) The commencement of the 7th chapter of St. John's Gospel, appears to me to contain a manifest reference to his absence from this pass-

(2) John, vii. 1.

(3) Luke, xiii. 1

evening offerings, but likewise for the private sacrifices of more devout worshippers, such an event as this massacre was not likely to have occurred, even if Pilate was present at Jerusalem at other times, unless the metropolis had been crowded with strangers, at least in numbers sufficient to excite some apprehension of dangerous tumult; for Pontius Pilate, though prodigal of blood, if the occasion seemed to demand the vigorous exercise of power, does not appear to have been wantonly sanguinary. It is, therefore, most probable, that the massacre took place during some public festival; and if so, it must have been either at the Passover or Pentecost, as Jesus was present at both the later feasts of the present year, those of Tabernacles and of the Dedication: nor does the slightest intimation occur of any disturbance of that nature at either (1). Who these Galileans were, whether they had been guilty of turbulent and seditious conduct, or were the innocent victims of the governor's jealousy, there is no evidence. It has been suggested, not without plausibility, that they were of the sect of Judas the Galilean; and, however they may not have been formally enrolled as belonging to this sect, they may have been, in some degree, infected with the same opinions; more especially, as properly belonging to the jurisdiction of Herod, these Galileans would scarcely have been treated with such unrelenting severity, unless implicated, or suspected to be implicated, in some designs obnoxious to the Roman sway. If, however, our conjecture be right, had he appeared at this festival, Jesus might have fallen undistinguished in a general massacre of his countrymen, by the direct interference of the Roman governor, and without the guilt of his rejection and death being attributable to the rulers or the nation of the Jews.

Concealment of Jesus.

Yet, be this as it may, during this period of the life of Jesus, it is most difficult to trace his course; his rapid changes have the semblance of concealment. At one time he appears at the extreme border of Palestine, the district immediately adjacent to that of Tyre and Sidon; he then seems to have descended again towards Bethsaida, and the desert country to the north of the Sea of Tiberias; he is then again on the immediate frontiers of Palestine, near the town of Cæsarea Philippi, close to the fountains of the Jordan.

(1) The point of time at which the notice of this transaction is introduced in the narrative of St. Luke, may appear irreconcilable with the opinion that it took place so far back as the previous Passover. This circumstance however admits of an easy explanation. The period at which this fact is introduced by St. Luke, was just before the last fatal visit to Jerusalem. Jesus had now expressed his fixed determination to attend the approaching Passover; he was actually on his way to the metropolis. It was precisely the time at which some who might take an interest in his personal safety, might think it well to warn him of his danger. These persons may have been entirely ignorant of his intermediate visits to Jerusalem, which had been sudden and

private. He had appeared unexpectedly; he had withdrawn without notice. They may have supposed, that having been absent at the period of the massacre in the remote parts of the country, he might be altogether unacquainted with the circumstances, or at least little impressed with their importance; or even, if not entirely ignorant, they might think it right to remind him of the dangerous commotion which had taken place at the preceding festival, and to intimate the possibility that under a governor so reckless of human life as Pilate had shown himself, and by recent circumstances not predisposed towards the Galilean name, he was exposing himself to most serious peril.

The incidents which occur at almost all these places coincide with his singular situation at this period of his life, and perpetually bear almost a direct reference to the state of public feeling at this particular time. His conduct towards the Greek or Syro-Phœnician woman may illustrate this (1). Those who watched the motions of Jesus with the greatest vigilance, either from attachment or animosity, must have beheld him with astonishment, at this period when every road was crowded with travellers towards Jerusalem, deliberately proceeding in an opposite direction ; thus, at the time of the most solemn festival, moving, as it were, directly contrary to the stream, which flowed in one current towards the capital. There appears at one time to have prevailed, among some, an obscure apprehension which, though only expressed during one of his later visits to Jerusalem (2), might have begun to creep into their minds at an earlier period ; that, after all, the Saviour might turn his back on his ungrateful and inhospitable country, or at least not fetter himself with the exclusive nationality inseparable from their conceptions of the true Messiah. And here, at this present instant, after having excited their hopes to the utmost, by the miracle which placed him, as it were, on a level with their lawgiver, and having afterwards afflicted them with bitter disappointment by his speech in the synagogue—here, at the season of the Passover, he was proceeding towards, if not beyond, the borders of the Holy Land ; placing himself, as it were, in direct communication with the uncircumcised, and imparting those blessings to strangers and aliens, which were the undoubted, inalienable property of the privileged race.

The Syro-
Phœnician
woman.

At this juncture, when he was upon the borders of the territory of Tyre and Sidon, a woman of heathen extraction (3), having heard the fame of his miracles, determined to have recourse to him to heal her daughter, who was suffering under diabolic possession. Whether adopting the common title, which she had heard that Jesus had assumed, or from any obscure notion of the Messiah, which could not but have penetrated into the districts immediately bordering on Palestine, she saluted him by his title of Son of David, and implored his mercy. In this instance alone Jesus, who on all other occasions is described as prompt and forward to hear the cry of the afflicted, turns, at first, a deaf and regardless ear to her supplication : the mercy is, as it were, slowly and reluctantly wrung from him. The secret of this apparent, but unusual, indifference to suffering, no doubt lies in the circumstances of the case. Nothing

(1) Matt. xv. 21—28.; Mark. vii. 24—30.

(2) John, vii. 35.

(3) She is called in one place a Canaanite, in another a Syro-Phœnician and a Greek. She was probably of Phœnician descent, and the Jews considered the whole of the Phœnician race as

descended from the remnant of the Canaanites, who were not extirpated. She was a Greek as distinguished from a Jew, for the Jews divided mankind into Jews and Greeks, as the Greeks did into Greeks and Barbarians.

would have been so repugnant to Jewish prejudice, especially at this juncture, as his admitting at once this recognition of his title, or his receiving and rewarding the homage of any stranger from the blood of Israel, particularly one descended from the accursed race of Canaan. The conduct of the apostles shows their harsh and Jewish spirit. They are indignant at her pertinacious importunity; they almost insist on her peremptory dismissal. That a stranger, a Canaanite, should share in the mercies of their master, does not seem to have entered into their thoughts: the brand of ancient condemnation was upon her; the hereditary hatefulness of the seed of Canaan marked her as a fit object for malediction, as the appropriate prey of the evil spirits, as without hope of blessing from the God of Israel. Jesus himself at first seems to countenance this exclusive tone. He declares that he is sent only to the race of Israel; that dogs (the common and approbrious term by which all religious aliens were described), could have no hope of sharing in the blessings jealously reserved for the children of Abraham. The humility of the woman's reply, "Truth, Lord, but the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from the master's table," might almost disarm the antipathy of the most zealous Jew. That the Gentiles might receive a kind of secondary and inferior benefit from their Messiah, was by no means in opposition to the vulgar belief; it left them in full possession of their exclusive religious dignity, while it was rather flattering to their pride than debasing to their prejudices, that, with such limitation, the power of their Redeemer should be displayed among Gentile foreigners. By his condescension, therefore, to their prejudices, Jesus was enabled to display his own benevolence, without awakening, or confirming if already awakened, the quick suspicions of his followers.

Jesus still
in partial
conceal-
ment.

After this more remote excursion, Jesus appears again, for a short time, nearer his accustomed residence; but still hovering, as it were, on the borders, and lingering rather in the wild mountainous region to the north and east of the lake, than descending to the more cultivated and populous districts to the west (1). But here his fame follows him; and even in these desert regions, multitudes, many of them bearing their sick and afflicted relatives, perpetually assemble around him (2). His conduct displays, as it were, a continual struggle between his benevolence and his caution: he seems as if he could not refrain from the indulgence of his goodness, while at the same time he is aware that every new cure may re-awaken the dangerous enthusiasm from which he had so recently withdrawn himself. In the hill country of Decapolis, a deaf and dumb man is restored to speech; he is strictly enjoined, though apparently without effect, to preserve the utmost secrecy. A second

(1) This may be assigned to the period between the Passover and the Pentecost.

(2) Matt. xv. 29—31., Mark, vii 31—37.

time the starving multitude in the desert appeal to his compassion. They are again miraculously fed, but Jesus, as though remembering the immediate consequences of the former event, dismisses them at once, and crossing in a boat to Dalmanutha or Magdala places, as it were, the lake between himself and their indiscreet zeal, or irrepressible gratitude (1). At Magdala he again encounters some of the Pharisaic party, who were, perhaps, returned from the Passover. They reiterate their perpetual demand of some sign which may satisfy their impatient incredulity, and a third time Jesus repels them with an allusion to the great "sign" of his resurrection (2).

As the Pentecost draws near, he again retires to the utmost borders of the land. He crosses back to Bethsaida, where a blind man is restored to sight, with the same strict injunctions of concealment (3). He then passes to the neighbourhood of Cæsarea Philippi, at the extreme verge of the land, a modern town, recently built on the site of the older, now named Paneas, situated almost close to the fountains of the Jordan (4).

Alone with his immediate disciples in this secluded region, he begins to unfold more distinctly, both his real character and his future fate, to their wondering ears. It is difficult to conceive the state of fluctuation and embarrassment in which the simple minds of the Apostles of Jesus must have been continually kept by what must have appeared the inexplicable, if not contradictory, conduct and language of their master. At one moment he seemed entirely to lift the veil from his own character; the next, it fell again and left them in more than their former state of suspense. Now, all is clear, distinct, comprehensible; then again, dim, doubtful, mysterious. Here their hopes are elevated to the highest, and all their preconceived notions of the greatness of the Messiah seem ripening into reality; there, the strange foreboding of his humiliating fate, which he communicates with more than usual distinctness, thrills them with apprehension. Their own destiny is opened to their prospect, crossed with the same strangely mingling lights and shadows. At one time they are promised miraculous endowments, and seem justified in all their ambitious hopes of eminence and distinction in the approaching kingdom; at the next, they are warned that they must expect to share in the humiliations and afflictions of their Teacher.

Perplexity
of the
Apostles.

Near Cæsarea Philippi Jesus questions his disciples as to the common view of his character. By some, it seems, he was supposed to be John the Baptist restored from the dead; by others, Elias, who was to re-appear on earth, previous to the final revelation of the Messiah; by others, Jeremiah, who, according to a tradition

Jesus near
Cæsarea
Philippi.

(1) Matt. xv. 32—39; Mark, viii. 1—9.
(2) Matt. xvi. 1—12; Mark, viii. 11—22.

(3) Mark, viii. 22—26.
(4) Mark, viii. 27.

to which we have before alluded, was to come to life : and when the ardent zeal of Peter recognises him under the most sacred title, which was universally considered as appropriated to the Messiah, " the Christ, the son of the Living God," his homage is no longer declined ; and the Apostle himself is commended in language so strong, that the pre-eminence of Peter over the rest of the twelve has been mainly supported by the words of Jesus, employed on this occasion. The transport of the Apostles at this open and distinct avowal of his character, although at present confined to the secret circle of his more immediate adherents, no doubt before long to be publicly proclaimed, and asserted with irresistible power, is almost instantaneously checked ; the bright expanding prospects change in a moment to the gloomy reverse, when Jesus proceeds to foretell to a greater number of his followers (1) his approaching lamentable fate, the hostility of all the rulers of the nation, his death, and that which was probably the least intelligible part of the whole prediction—his resurrection (2). The highly excited Peter cannot endure the sudden and unexpected reverse ; he betrays his reluctance to believe that the Messiah, whom he had now, he supposed, full authority to array in the highest temporal splendour which his imagination could suggest, could possibly apprehend so degrading a doom. Jesus not only represses the ardour of the apostle, but enters at some length into the earthly dangers to which his disciples would be exposed, and the unworldly nature of Christian reward. They listened, but how far they comprehended these sublime truths must be conjectured from their subsequent conduct.

The Transfiguration.

It was to minds thus preoccupied, on one hand full of unrepressed hopes of the instantaneous revelation of the Messiah in all his temporal greatness, on the other, embarrassed with the apparently irreconcilable predictions of the humiliation of their Master, that the extraordinary scene of the Transfiguration was presented (3). Whatever explanation we adopt of this emblematic vision, its purport and its effect upon the minds of the three disciples who beheld it, remain the same (4). Its significant sights and sounds manifestly announced the equality, the superiority of Jesus to the founder, and to him who may almost be called the restorer of the Theocracy, to Moses the lawgiver, and Elias the representative of the prophets. These holy personages had, as it were, seemed to pay homage to Jesus ; they had vanished, and he alone had remained. The appearance of Moses and Elias at the time of the Messiah, was strictly in accordance with the general tradi-

(1) Mark, viii. 34.

(2) Matt. xvi. 21—28. ; Mark, viii. 31. ix. 1. ; Luke, ix. 18—27.

(3) Tradition has assigned this scene to Mount Tabor, probably for no better reason than because Tabor is the best known and most conspicuous height in the whole of Galilee. The

order of the narrative points most distinctly to the neighbourhood of Casarea Philippi, and the Mons Paneus is a much more probable situation.

(4) Matt. xvii. 1—21. Mark. ix. 2—29. Luke, ix. 28—42.

tion (1); and when in his astonishment Peter proposes to make there three of those huts or cabins of boughs, which the Jews were accustomed to run up as temporary dwellings at the time of the Feast of the Tabernacles, he seems to have supposed that the spirits of the lawgiver and the prophet were to make their permanent residence with the Messiah, and that this mountain was to be, as it were, another sacred place, a second Sinai, from which the new kingdom was to commence its dominion, and issue its mandates.

The other circumstances of the transaction, the height of which they stood, their own half-waking state, the sounds from heaven (whether articulate voices or thunder, which appeared to give the divine assent to their own preconceived notions of the Messiah), the wonderful change in the appearance of Jesus, the glittering cloud which seemed to absorb the two spirits, and leave Jesus alone upon the mountain,—all the incidents of this majestic and mysterious scene, whether presented as dreams before their sleeping, or as visions before their waking senses, tended to elevate still higher their already exalted notions of their Master. Again, however, they appear to have been doomed to hear a confirmation of that, which, if their reluctant minds had not refused to entertain the humiliating thought, would have depressed them to utter despondency. After healing the dæmoniac, whom they had in vain attempted to exorcise, the assurance of his approaching death is again renewed and in the clearest language, by their master (2).

From the distant and the solitary scenes where these transactions had taken place, Jesus now returns to the populous district about Capernaum. On his entrance into the city, the customary payment of half a shekel for the maintenance of the Temple, a capitation tax which was levied on every Jew, in every quarter of the world, is demanded of Jesus (3). How then will he act, who but now declared himself to his disciples as the Messiah, the son of God? will he claim his privilege of exemption as the Messiah? will the Son of God contribute to the maintenance of the Temple of the Father? or will the long-expected public declaration at length take place? will the claim of immunity virtually confirm his claim to the privileges of his descent? He again reverts to his former cautious habit of never unnecessarily offending the prejudices of the people; he complies with the demand, and the money is miraculously supplied.

But on the minds of the Apostles the recent scenes are still work-

Tribute money.

(1) Dixit sanctus benedictus Mosi, sicut vitam tuam dedisti pro Israele in hoc seculo, sic tempore futuro, tempore Messia, quando mittam ad eos Eham prophetam vos duo venietis simul

Debar. Rab. 293. Compare Lightfoot, Schoetgen, and Eisenmenger, in loco.

(2) Matt. xvii. 22, 23; Mark, ix. 30—32 Luke, ix. 44, 45.

(3) Matt. xvii. 24—28.

Continuation of the Apostles.

Jesus commends a child to the imitation of the Apostles.

Feast of Tabernacles.

ing with unallayed excitement. The dark, the melancholy language of their Master appears to pass away and leave no impression upon their minds; while every circumstance which animates or exalts, is treasured with the utmost care; and in a short time, on their road to Capernaum, they are fiercely disputing among themselves their relative rank in the instantaneously expected kingdom of the Messiah (1). The beauty of the significant action by which Jesus repressed the rising emotions of their pride, is heightened by considering it in relation to the immediate circumstances (2). Even now, at this crisis of their exaltation, he takes a child; places it in the midst of them, and declares, that only those in such a state of innocence and docility, are qualified to become members of the new community. Over such humble and blameless beings, over children, and over men of child-like dispositions, the vigilant providence of God would watch with unsleeping care, and those who injured them would be exposed to his strong displeasure (3). The narrow jealousy of the Apostles, which would have prohibited a stranger from making use of the name of Jesus for the purpose of exorcism, was rebuked in the same spirit: all who would embrace the cause of Christ, were to be encouraged rather than discountenanced. Some of the most striking sentences, and one parable which illustrates in the most vivid manner the extent of Christian forgiveness and mutual forbearance, close, as it were, this period of the Saviour's life, by instilling into the minds of his followers, as the time of the final collision with his adversaries approaches, the milder and more benignant tenets of the evangelic religion.

The Passover had come, and Jesus had remained in the obscure borders of the land; the Pentecost had passed away, and the expected public assumption of the title and functions of the Messiah had not yet been made. The autumnal Feast of Tabernacles (4) is at hand; his incredulous brethren again assemble around him, and even the impatient disciples can no longer endure the suspense: they urge him with almost imperious importunity to cast off at length his prudential, his mysterious reserve; at least to vindicate the faith of his followers, and to justify the zeal of his partisans, by displaying those works, which he seemed so studiously to conceal among the obscure towns of Galilee, in the crowded metropolis of the nation at some great period of national assemblage (5). In order to prevent any indiscreet proclamation of his approach, or any procession of his followers, through the country,

(1) It is observable that the ambitious disputes of the disciples concerning primacy or preference, usually follow the mention of Christ's death and resurrection. Luke, ix. 44—46.; Matt. xx. 18—20.; Luke, xxii. 22—24. They had so strong a prepossession that the resurrection of Christ (*which they no doubt understood in a purely Jewish sense, compare Mark. ix. 10.*) should introduce the earthly kingdom of the Messiah,

that no declaration of our Lord could remove it from their minds: they always "understood not what was spoken." Lightfoot, *in loco*.

(2) Matt. xviii. 1—6.; Mark, ix. 33—37.

(3) Matt. xviii. 6—10.; Mark, ix. 37.

(4) On the fifteenth day of the seventh month. Deut. xxiii. 39—43. About the end of our September, or the beginning of October.

(5) John. vii. 2. to viii. 59.

and probably lest the rulers should have time to organise their hostile measures, Jesus disguises under ambiguous language his intention of going up to Jerusalem : he permits his brethren, who suppose that he is still in Galilee, to set forward without him. Still, however, his movements are the subject of anxious inquiry among the assembling multitudes in the capital; and many secret and half-stifled murmurs among the Galileans, some exalting his virtues, others representing him as a dangerous disturber of the public peace, keep up the general curiosity about his character and designs (1). On a sudden, in the midst of the festival, he appears in the Temple, and takes his station as a public teacher. The rulers seem to have been entirely off their guard; and the multitude are perplexed by the bold and as yet uninterrupted publicity, with which a man, whom the Sanhedrin were well known to have denounced as guilty of a capital offence, entered the court of the Temple, and calmly pursued his office of instructing the people. The fact that he had taken on himself that office was of itself unprecedented and surprising to many. As we have observed before, he belonged to no school, he had been bred at the feet of none of the recognised and celebrated teachers, yet he assumed superiority to all, and arraigned the whole of the wise men of vain glory rather than of sincere piety. His own doctrine was from a higher source, and possessed more undeniable authority. He even boldly anticipated the charge, which he knew would be renewed against him, his violation of the Sabbath by his works of mercy. He accused them of conspiring against his life; a charge which seems to have excited indignation as well as astonishment (2). The suspense and agitation of the assemblage are described with a few rapid, but singularly expressive, touches. It was part of the vague popular belief, that the Messiah would appear in some strange, sudden, and surprising manner. The circumstances of his coming were thus left to the imagination of each to fill up, according to his own notions of that which was striking and magnificent. But the extraordinary incidents which attended the birth of Jesus were forgotten, or had never been generally known; his origin and extraction were supposed to be ascertained; he appeared but as the legitimate descendant of a humble Galilean family; his acknowledged brethren were ordinary and undistinguished men. "We know this man whence he is; but when Christ cometh no man knoweth whence he is." His mysterious allusions to his higher descent were heard with mingled feelings of indignation and awe. On the multitude his wonderful works had made a favourable impression, which was not a little increased by the inactivity and hesitation of the rulers. The Sanhedrin, in which the Pharisaic

Jesus in
the Tem-
ple at Je-
rusalem.

(1) John, vii. 11—13

(2) John, vii. 19—24

Perplexity
of the
Sanhedrin.

party still predominated, were evidently unprepared, and had concerted no measures either to counteract his progress in the public mind, or to secure his person. Their authority in such a case was probably, in the absence of the Roman prefect, or without the concurrence of the commander of the Roman guard in the Antonia, by no means clearly ascertained. With every desire, therefore, for his apprehension, they at first respected his person, and their non-interference was mistaken for connivance, if not as a sanction, for his proceedings. They determine at length on stronger measures; their officers are sent out to arrest the offender, but seem to have been overawed by the tranquil dignity and commanding language of Jesus, and were perhaps in some degree controlled by the manifest favour of the people (1).

On the great day of the feast the agitation of the assembly, as well as the perplexity of the Sanhedrin, is at its height. Jesus still appears publicly; he makes a striking allusion to the ceremonial of the day. Water was drawn from the hallowed fountain of Siloah, and borne into the Temple with the sound of the trumpet and with great rejoicing. "Who," say the Rabbins, "hath not seen the rejoicing on the drawing of this water, hath seen no rejoicing at all." They sang in the procession, "with joy shall they draw water from the wells of salvation (2)." In the midst of this tumult, Jesus, according to his custom, calmly diverts the attention to the great moral end of his own teaching, and in allusion to the rite, declares that from himself are to flow the real living waters of salvation. The ceremony almost appears to have been arrested in its progress; and open discussions of his claims to be considered as the Messiah divide the wondering multitude. The Sanhedrin find that they cannot depend on their own officers, whom they accuse of surrendering themselves to the popular deception, in favour of one condemned by the rulers of the nation. Even within their council, Nicodemus, the secret proselyte of Jesus, ventures to interfere in his behalf; and though, with the utmost caution, he appeals to the law, and asserts the injustice of condemning Jesus without a hearing: (he seems to have desired that Jesus might be admitted publicly to plead his own cause before the Sanhedrin), he is accused by the more violent of leaning to the Galilean party—the party which bore its own condemnation in the simple fact of adhering to a Galilean prophet. The council dispersed without coming to any decision.

Woman
taken in
adultery.

On the next day, for the former transactions had taken place in the earlier part of the week, the last, the most crowded and solemn day of the festival, a more insidious attempt is made, whether from a premeditated or fortuitous circumstance, to undermine the grow-

(1) John, verse 32

(2) John, vii. 32—39.; Lightfoot, in loco.

ing popularity of Jesus; an attempt to make him assume a judicial authority in the case of a woman taken in the act of adultery. Such an act would probably have been resisted by the whole Sanhedrin as an invasion of their province; and as it appeared that he must either acquit or condemn the criminal, in either case he would give an advantage to his adversaries. If he inclined to severity, they might be able, notwithstanding the general benevolence of his character, to contrast their own leniency in the administration of the law (this was the characteristic of the Pharisaic party, which distinguished them from the Sadducees, and of this the Rabbinical writings furnish many curious illustrations), with the rigour of the new teacher, and thus to conciliate the naturally compassionate feelings of the people, which would have been shocked by the unusual spectacle of a woman suffering death, or even condemned to capital punishment, for such an offence (1). If, on the other hand, he acquitted her, he abrogated the express letter of the Mosaic statute; and the multitude might be inflamed by this new evidence of that which the ruling party had constantly endeavoured to instil into their minds, the hostility of Jesus to the law of their forefathers, and his secret design of abolishing the whole long-reverenced and heaven-enacted code. Nothing can equal, if the expression may be ventured, the address of Jesus, in extricating himself from this difficulty; his turning the current of popular odium, or even contempt, upon his assailants; the manner in which, by summoning them to execute the law, he extorts a tacit confession of their own loose morals,—“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (this being the office of the chief accuser); and finally shows mercy to the accused, without in the least invalidating the decision of the law against the crime, yet not without the most gentle and effective moral admonition.

After this discomfiture of his opponents, Jesus appears to have been permitted to pursue his course of teaching undisturbed, until new circumstances occurred to inflame the resentment of his enemies. He had taken his station in a part of the Temple court called the Treasury. His language became more mysterious, yet at the same time more authoritative—more full of those allusions to his character as the Messiah, to his divine descent, and at length to his pre-existence. The former of these were in some degree familiar to the popular conception; the latter, though it entered into the higher notion of the Messiah, which was prevalent among those who entertained the loftiest views of his character, nevertheless, from the manner in which it was expressed, jarred with the harshest discord upon the popular ear. They listened with patience to

Jesus
teaches in
the Tem-
ple.

1. Grotius has a different view.—“*Utrum ac-
cusator et apud Romanos immittitur majestas,
ita apud populum immittitur libertas.*” That

they might accuse him to the Romans of en-
croaching on their authority, or to the people
of surrendering their rights and independence.

Jesus while he proclaimed himself the light of the world : though they questioned his right to assume the title of "Son of the Heavenly Father" without further witness than he had already produced, they yet permitted him to proceed in his discourse : they did not interrupt him when he still further alluded, in dark and ambiguous terms, to his own fate : when he declared that God was with him, and that his doctrines were pleasing to the Almighty Father, a still more favourable impression was made, and many openly espoused his belief ; but when he touched on their rights and privileges as descendants of Abraham, the subject on which above all they were most jealous and sensitive, the collision became inevitable. He spoke of their freedom, the moral freedom from the slavery of their own passions, to which they were to be exalted by the revelation of the truth ; but freedom was a word which to them only bore another sense. They broke in at once with indignant denial that the race of Abraham, however the Roman troops were guarding their Temple, had ever forfeited their national independence (1). He spoke as if the legitimacy of their descent from Abraham depended not on their hereditary genealogy, but on the moral evidence of their similarity in virtue to their great forefather. The good, the pious, the gentle Abraham was not the father of those who were meditating the murder of an innocent man. If their fierce and sanguinary dispositions disqualified them from being the children of Abraham, how much more from being, as they boasted, the adopted children of God ; the spirit of evil, in whose darkest and most bloody temper they were ready to act, was rather the parent of men with dispositions so diabolic (2). At this their wrath bursts forth in more unrestrained vehemence ; the worst and most bitter appellations by which a Jew could express his hatred, were heaped on Jesus ; he is called a Samaritan, and declared to be under dæmoniac possession. But when Jesus proceeded to assert his title to the Messiahship, by proclaiming that Abraham had received some intimation of the future great religious revolution to be effected by him ; when he who was "not fifty years old" (that is, not arrived at that period when the Jews, who assumed the public offices at thirty, were released from them on account of their age), declared that he had existed before Abraham ; when he thus placed himself not merely on an equality with, but asserted his immeasurable superiority to, the great father of their race ; when he uttered the awful and significant words which identified him, as it were, with the great self-existent Deity, "Before Abraham was, I am," they immediately rushed forward to crush without trial, without further hearing, him whom they considered the self-convicted blasphemer. As there was always some work of

(1) John, viii. 33

(2) John, viii. 44.

building or repair going on within the Temple, which was not considered to be finished till many years after, these instruments for the fulfilment of the legal punishment were immediately at hand; and Jesus only escaped from being stoned on the spot by passing, during the wild and frantic tumult, through the midst of his assailants, and withdrawing from the court of the Temple.

But even in this exigency he pauses at not great distance to perform an act of mercy (1). There was a man, notoriously blind from his birth, who seems to have taken his accustomed station in some way leading to the Temple. Some of the disciples of Jesus had accompanied him, and perhaps, as it were, covered his retreat from his furious assailants; and as by this time, probably, being safe from pursuit, they stopped near the place where the blind man stood. The whole history of the cure of this blind man is remarkable, as singularly illustrative of Jewish feeling and opinion, and on account both of the critical juncture at which it took place, and the strict judicial investigation which it seems to have undergone before the hostile Sanhedrin. The common popular belief ascribed every malady or affliction to some sin, of which it was the direct and providential punishment—a notion, as we have before hinted, of all others, the most likely to harden the bigoted heart to indifference, or even contempt and abhorrence of the heaven-visited, and therefore heaven-branded, sufferer. This notion, which however was so overpowered by the strong spirit of nationalism as to obtain for the Jews in foreign countries the admiration of the heathen for their mutual compassion towards each other, while they had no kindly feeling for strangers, no doubt, from the language of Jesus on many occasions, exercised a most pernicious influence on the general character in their native land, where the lessons of Christian kindness and humanity appear to have been as deeply needed as they were unacceptable. But how was this notion of the penal nature of all suffering to be reconciled with the fact of a man being born subject to one of the most grievous afflictions of our nature—the want of sight? They were thus thrown back upon those other singular

Healing
the blind
man.

(1) I hesitate at the arrangement of no passage in the whole narrative more than this history of the blind man. Many harmonists have placed it during the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem, at the Feast of Dedication. The connection in the original, however, seems more natural, as a continuation of the preceding incident: yet at first sight it seems extremely improbable that Jesus should have time during his hurried escape to work this miracle; and still more that he should again encounter his enraged adversaries without dangerous or fatal consequences. We may however suppose that this incident took place without the Temple, probably in the street leading down from the Temple to the Valley of Kidron, and to Bethany, where Jesus spent the night. The attempt to stone him was an outburst of popular tumult: it is clear that he had been guilty of no offence, legally capital,

or it would have been urged against him at his last trial, since witnesses could not have been wanting to his words: and it seems quite clear that, however they might have been glad to have availed themselves of any such ebullition of popular violence, as a court, the Sanhedrin, divided and in awe of the Roman power, was constrained to proceed with regularity, and according to the strict letter of the law. MacKnight would place the cure immediately after the escape from the Temple, the recognition of the man, and the subsequent proceedings during the visit at the Dedication. But in fact the popular feeling seems to have been in a perpetual state of fluctuation; at one instant their indignation was inflamed by the language of Jesus, at the next some one of his extraordinary works seems to have caused as strong a sensation, at least with a considerable party, in his favour.

notions which prevailed among the Jews of that period—either his fathers or himself must have sinned. Was it, then, a malady inherited from the guilt of his parents? or was the soul, having sinned in a pre-existent state, now expiating its former offences in the present form of being? This notion, embraced by Plato in the West, was more likely to have been derived by the Jews from the East (1), where it may be regularly traced from India through the different oriental religions. Jesus at once corrected this inveterate error, and having anointed the eyes of the blind man with clay, sent him to wash in the celebrated pool of Siloam, at no great distance from the street of the Temple (2). The return of the blind man restored to sight excited so much astonishment, that the bystanders began to dispute whether he was really the same who had been so long familiarly known. The man set their doubts at rest by declaring himself to be the same. The Sanhedrin, now so actively watching the actions of Jesus, and indeed inflamed to the utmost resentment, had no course but, if possible, to invalidate the effect of such a miracle on the public mind; they hoped either to detect some collusion between the parties, or to throw suspicion on the whole transaction: at all events the case was so public, that they could not avoid bringing it under the cognisance of their tribunal. The man was summoned, and, as it happened to have been the Sabbath, the stronger Pharisaic party were in hopes of getting rid of the question altogether by the immediate decision, that a man guilty of a violation of the law could not act under the sanction of God. But a considerable party in the Sanhedrin were still either too prudent, too just, or too much impressed by the evidence of the case, to concur in so summary a sentence. This decision of the council appears to have led to a more close investigation of the whole transaction. The first object appears to have been, by questioning the man himself, to implicate him as an adherent of Jesus, and, so to throw discredit upon his testimony. The man, either from caution or ignorance of the character assumed by Jesus, merely replied that he believed him to be a prophet. Baffled on this point, the next step of the Pharisaic party is to inquire into the reality of the malady and the cure. The parents of the blind man are examined; their deposition simply affirms the fact of their son having been born blind, and having received his sight; for it was now notorious that the Sanhedrin had threatened all the partisans of Jesus with the terrible sentence of excommunication; and the timid parents, trembling before this awful tribunal, refer the

Conduct of
the Sanhe-
dron.
Near
Samaria.

(1) It may be traced in the *Egypto-Jewish book of the Wisdom of Solomon*, viii. 19, 20. The Pharisees' notion of the transmigration of souls may be found in *Josephus*, *Ant.* xviii. 1.

(2) It is a curious coincidence that anointing a blind man's eyes on the Sabbath is expressly

forbidden in the Jewish traditional law. *Kuinoel in loc.* According to *Grotius*, opening the eyes of the blind was an acknowledged sign of the Messiah. *Midrash in Psalm*, cxlvi. 8., *Isaiah*, xlii. 7.; it was a miracle never known to be wrought by Moses or by any other prophet.

judges to their son for all further information on this perilous question.

The further proceedings of the Sanhedrin are still more remarkable : unable to refute the fact of the miraculous cure, they endeavour, nevertheless, to withhold from Jesus all claim upon the gratitude of him whom he had relieved, and all participation in the power with which the instantaneous cure was wrought. The man is exhorted to give praise for the blessing to God alone, and to abandon the cause of Jesus of Nazareth, whom they authoritatively denounce as a sinner. He rejoins, with straight-forward simplicity, that he simply deposes to the fact of his blindness, and of his having received his sight : on such high questions as the character of Jesus, he presumes not at first to dispute with the great legal tribunal, with the chosen wisdom of the nation. Wearied, however, at length with their pertinacious examination, the man seems to discover the vantage ground on which he stands ; the altercation becomes more spirited on his part, more full of passionate violence on theirs. He declares that he has already again and again repeated the circumstances of the transaction, and that it is in vain for them to question him further, unless they are determined, if the truth of the miracle should be established, to acknowledge the divine mission of Jesus. This seems to have been the object at which the more violent party in the Sandhedrin aimed ; so far to throw him off his guard, as to make him avow himself the partisan of Jesus, and by this means to shake his whole testimony. On the instant they begin to revile him, to appeal to the popular clamour, to declare him a secret adherent of Jesus, while they were the stedfast disciples of Moses. God was acknowledged to have spoken by Moses, and to compare Jesus with him was inexpiable impiety — Jesus, of whose origin they professed themselves ignorant. The man rejoins in still bolder terms, “ Why, herein is a marvellous thing, that ye know not from whence he is, but yet he hath opened mine eyes.” He continues in the same strain openly to assert his conviction that no man, unless commissioned by God, could work such wonders. Their whole history, abounding as it did with extraordinary events, displayed nothing more wonderful than that which had so recently taken place in his person. This daring and disrespectful language excites the utmost indignation in the whole assembly. They revert to the popular opinion, that the blindness with which the man was born, was a proof of his having been accursed of God. “ Thou wast altogether born in sin, and dost thou teach us ? ” God marked thy very birth, thy very cradle, with the indelible sign of his displeasure ; and therefore the testimony of one branded by the wrath of Heaven can be of no value. Forgetful that even on their own principle, if, by being born blind, the man was manifestly an object of the divine anger, his gaining his sight

was an evidence equally unanswerable of the divine favour. But while they traced the hand of God in the curse, they refused to trace it in the blessing; to close the eyes was a proof of divine power, but to open them none whatever. The fearless conduct, however, of the man appears to have united the divided council; the formal and terrible sentence of excommunication was pronounced, probably for the first time, against any adherent of Jesus. The evangelist concludes the narrative, as if to show that the man was not as yet a declared disciple of Christ, with a second interview between the blind man and Jesus, in which Jesus openly accepted the title of the Messiah, the Son of God, and received the homage of the now avowed adherent. Nor did Jesus discontinue his teaching on account of this declared interposition of the Sanhedrin; his manifest superiority throughout this transaction rather appears to have caused a new schism in the council, which secured him from any violent measures on their part, until the termination of the festival.

Near
Samaria.

Another collision takes place with some of the Pharisaic party, with whom he now seems scarcely to keep any measure: he openly denounces them as misleading the people, and declares himself the "one true Shepherd." Whither Jesus retreated after this conflict with the ruling powers, we have no distinct information—most probably however into Galilee (1); nor is it possible with certainty to assign those events, which filled up the period between the autumnal Feast of Tabernacles and that of the Dedication of the Temple, which took place in the winter. Now, however, Jesus appears more distinctly to have avowed his determination not to remain in his more concealed and private character in Galilee: but when the occasion should demand, when, at the approaching Passover, the whole nation should be assembled in the metropolis, he would confront them, and at length bring his acceptance or rejection to a crisis (2). He now, at times at least, assumes greater state; messengers are sent before him to proclaim his arrival in the different towns and villages; and as the Feast of Dedication draws near, he approaches the borders of Samaria, and sends forward some of his followers into a neighbouring village, to announce his approach (3). Whether the Samaritans may have entertained some hopes, from the rumour of his former proceedings in their country, that, persecuted by the Jews, and avowedly opposed to the

(1) From this period the difficulty of arranging a consistent chronological narrative out of the separate relations of the evangelists, increases to the greatest degree. Mr. Greswell, to establish his system, is actually obliged to make Jesus, when the Samaritans refuse to receive him because "his face was as though he would go to Jerusalem," to be travelling in the directly opposite direction. He likewise, in my opinion, on quite unsatisfactory grounds, endeavours to

prove that the "village of Martha and Mary was not Bethany." Any arrangement which places (Luke, x. 38—42.) the scene in the house of Mary and Martha, after the raising of Lazarus, appears highly improbable.

(2) By taking the expression of St. Luke "he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem," in this more general sense, many difficulties, if not avoided, are considerably diminished.

(3) Luke. ix. 51—56

leading parties in Jerusalem, he might espouse their party in the national quarrel, and were therefore instigated by disappointment as well as jealousy; or whether it was merely an accidental outburst of the old irreconcilable feud, the inhospitable village refused to receive him (1). The disciples were now elate with the expectation of the approaching crisis; on their minds all the dispiriting predictions of the fate of their Master passed away without the least impression; they were indignant that their triumphant procession should be arrested; and with these more immediate and peculiar motives mingled, no doubt, the implacable spirit of national hostility. They thought that the hour of vengeance was now come; that even their gentle Master would resent on these deadliest foes of the race of Israel, this deliberate insult on his dignity; that, as he had in some respects resembled the ancient prophets, he would now not hesitate to assume that fiercer and more terrific majesty, with which, according to their ancient histories, these holy men had at times been avenged; they entreated their Master to call down fire from heaven to consume the village. Jesus simply replied by a sentence, which at once established the incalculable difference between his own religion and that which it was to succeed. This sentence, most truly sublime and most characteristic of the evangelical religion, ever since the establishment of Christianity has been struggling to maintain its authority against the still-reviving Judaism, which, inseparable it should seem from uncivilised and unchristian man, has constantly endeavoured to array the Deity, rather in his attributes of destructive power than of preserving mercy. "The Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them." So speaking he left the inhospitable Samaritans unharmed, and calmly passed to another village.

It appears to me probable that he here left the direct road to the metropolis through Samaria, and turned aside to the district about Scythopolis and the valley of the Jordan, and most likely crossed into Peræa (2). From hence, if not before, he sent out his messengers with greater regularity (3), and it might seem, to keep up some resemblance with the established institutions of the nation, he chose the number of Seventy, a number already sanctified in the notions of the people, as that of the great Sanhedrin of the nation, who deduced their own origin and authority from the Council of Seventy, established by Moses in the wilderness. The Seventy after a short absence returned and made a favourable report of the in-

(1) The attendance of the Jews at the Feast of the Dedication, a solemnity of more recent institution, was not unlikely to be still more obnoxious to the possessors of the rival temple, than the other great national feasts. This consideration, in the want of more decisive grounds, may be some argument for placing this event at the present period. I find that Doddridge had before suggested this allusion. The inhabitants

of Ginea (Josephus, Ant. xx. ch. 6.) fell on certain Galileans proceeding to Jerusalem for one of the feasts, and slew many of them.

(2) After the visit to Jerusalem at the Feast of the Dedication, he went *again* (John, x. 40.) into the country beyond Jordan; he must therefore have been there before the Feast.

(3) Luke, x. 1—16

fluence which they had obtained over the people (1). The language of Jesus, both in his charge to his disciples and in his observations on the report of their success, appears to indicate the still approaching crisis; it should seem that even the towns in which he had wrought his mightiest works, Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum, at least the general mass of the people, and the influential rulers, now had declared against him. They are condemned in terms of unusual severity for their blindness; yet among the meek and humble he had a still increasing hold—and the days were now at hand, which the disciples were permitted to behold, and for which the wise and good for many ages had been looking forward with still baffled hopes (2).

Feast of
Dedica-
tion.
Jesus
again in
Jerusalem.

It was during the absence of the Seventy, or immediately after their return, that Jesus, who perhaps had visited in the interval many towns and villages both of Galilee and Peræa, which his central position near the Jordan commanded, descended to the winter Festival of the Dedication (3). Once it is clear that he drew near to Jerusalem, at least as near as the village of Bethany; and though not insensible to the difficulties of this view, we cannot but think that this village, about two miles' distance from Jerusalem, and the house of the relations of Lazarus, was the place where he was concealed during both his two later unexpected and secret visits to the metropolis, and where he in general passed the nights during the week of the last Passover (4). His appearance at this festival seems to have been, like the former, sudden and unlooked-for. The multitude probably at this time was not so great, both on account of the season, and because the festival was kept in other places besides Jerusalem (5), though of course with the greatest splendour and concourse in the Temple itself. Jesus was seen walking in one of the porticoes or arcades which surrounded the outer court of the Temple, that to the east, which from its greater splendour, being formed of a triple instead of a double row of columns, was called by the name of Solomon's. The leading Jews, whether unprepared for more violent measures, or with some insidious design, now address him, seemingly neither in an hostile nor unfriendly tone. It almost appears, that having before at-

(1) Luke, 17—20.

(2) Luke, x. 24. The parable of the good Samaritan may gain in impressiveness if considered in connection with the recent transactions in Samaria, and as perhaps delivered during the journey to Jerusalem, near the place where the scene is laid—the wild and dangerous country between Jericho and Jerusalem.

(3) This feast was instituted by Judas Maccabeus. 1 Mace. 4—5. It was kept on the 25th of the month Gisleu, answering to our 15th of December. The houses were illuminated at night during the whole period of the feast, which lasted eight days. John, x. 22—39.

(4) In connecting Luke, x. 38—42 with John,

x. 22—39., there is the obvious difficulty of the former evangelist mentioning the comparatively unimportant circumstance which he relates, and being entirely silent about the latter. But this objection is common to all harmonies of the Gospels. The silence of the three former Evangelists concerning the events in Jerusalem is equally remarkable, under every system, whether, according to Bishop Marsh and the generality of the great German scholars we suppose the Evangelists to have compiled from a common document, or adhere to any of the older theories, that each wrote either entirely independently or as supplementary to the preceding Evangelists.

(5) Lightfoot, *in loco*.

tempted force, they are now inclined to try the milder course of persuasion; their language sounds like the expostulation of impatience. Why, they inquire, does he thus continue to keep up this strange excitement? why thus persist in endangering the public peace? why does he not avow himself at once? why does he not distinctly assert himself to be the Christ, and by some signal, some public, some indisputable, evidence of his being the Messiah, at once set at rest the doubts, and compose the agitation of the troubled nation? The answer of Jesus is an appeal to the wonderful works which he had already wrought; but this evidence the Jews, in their present state and disposition of mind, were morally incapable of appreciating. He had already avowed himself, but in language unintelligible to their ears; a few had heard him, a few would receive the reward of their obedience, and those few were, in the simple phrase, the sheep who heard his voice. But as he proceeded, his language assumed a higher, a more mysterious, tone. He spoke of his unity with the great Father of the worlds. "I and my Father are one (1)." However understood, his words sounded to the Jewish ears so like direct blasphemy, as again to justify on the spot the summary punishment of the law. Without further trial they prepared to stone him where he stood. Jesus arrested their fury on the instant by a calm appeal to the manifest moral goodness, as well as the physical power, of the Deity displayed in his works. The Jews in plain terms accused him of blasphemously ascribing to himself the title of God. He replied by reference to their sacred books, in which they could not deny that the divine name was sometimes ascribed to beings of an inferior rank; how much less, therefore, ought they to be indignant at that sacred name being assumed by him, in whom the great attributes of divinity, both the power and the goodness, had thus manifestly appeared. His wonderful works showed the intercommunion of nature in this respect, between himself and the Almighty. This explanation, far beyond their moral perceptions, only excited a new burst of fury, which Jesus eluded, and retiring again from the capital, returned to the district beyond the Jordan.

The three months which elapsed between the Feast of Dedication and the Passover (2) were no doubt occupied in excursions, if not in regular progresses, through the different districts of the Holy Land, on both sides of the river, which his central position, near one of the most celebrated fords, was extremely well suited to command. Wherever he went, multitudes assembled around him; and at one time the government of Herod was seized with alarm, and Jesus received information that his life was in danger, and that he might apprehend the same fate which had befallen John the Baptist

Period between the Feast of Dedication and the Passover.

(1) John, x. 30.

xviii. 34.; Matt. xix. xx. to verse 28.; Mark. x

(2) Luke, xi. xii. xiii. to verse 30., also to 1—31.

if he remained in Galilee or Peræa, both which districts were within the dominions of Herod. It is remarkable that this intelligence came from some of the Pharisaic party (1), whether suborned by Herod, thus peacefully, and without incurring any further unpopularity, to rid his dominions of one who might become either the designing or the innocent cause of tumult and confusion (the reflection of Jesus on the crafty character of Herod (2) may confirm the notion, that the Pharisees were acting under his insidious direction), or whether the Pharisaic party were of themselves desirous to force Jesus, before the Passover arrived, into the province of Judæa, where the Roman government might either, of itself, be disposed to act with decision, or might grant permission to the Sanhedrin to interpose its authority with the utmost rigour. But it was no doubt in this quarter that he received intelligence of a very different nature, that led to one of his præternatural works, which of itself was the most extraordinary, and evidently made the deepest impression upon the public mind (3). The raising of Lazarus may be considered the proximate cause of the general conspiracy for his death, by throwing the popular feeling more decidedly on his side, and thereby deepening the fierce animosity of the rulers, who now saw that they had no alternative but to crush him at once, or to admit his triumph.

Raising of
Lazarus.

We have supposed that it was at the house of Lazarus, or of his relatives, in the village of Bethany, that Jesus had passed the nights during his recent visits to Jerusalem : at some distance from the metropolis he receives information of the dangerous illness of that faithful adherent, whom he seems to have honoured with peculiar attachment. He at first assures his followers in ambiguous language of the favourable termination of the disorder ; and after two day's delay, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his disciples who feared that he was precipitately rushing, as it were, into the toils of his enemies, and who resolve to accompany him, though in acknowledged apprehension that his death was inevitable, Jesus first informs his disciples of the actual death of Lazarus, yet, nevertheless, persists in his determination of visiting Bethany. On his arrival at Bethany the dead man, who according to Jewish usage had no doubt been immediately buried, had been four days in the sepulchre. The house was full of Jews, who had come to console, according to their custom, the afflicted relatives ; and the characters assigned in other parts of the history to the two sisters, are strik-

(1) Luke, xiii. 31—35.

(2) Wetstein has struck out the character of Herod with great strength and success:—"Ille, ut plerique ejus temporis principes et presides, mores ad exemplum Tiberii imperatoris, qui nullam ex virtutibus suis magis quam dissimulationem diligebat, composuit; tunc autem erat annosa vulpes, cum jam triginta annos principa-

tum gessisset, et diversissimas personas egisset, personam servi apud Tiberium, domini apud Galileam, amici Sejano, Artabano, fratribus suis Archelao, Philippo, Herodi alteri, quorum studia erant diversissima, et inter se et a studiis Herodis ipsius." In loc.

(3) John, xi. 1—46.

ingly exemplified in their conduct on this mournful occasion. The more active Martha hastens to meet Jesus, laments his absence at the time of her brother's death, and, on his declaration of the resurrection of her brother, reverts only to the general resurrection of mankind, a truth embodied in a certain sense in the Jewish creed. So far Christ answers in language which intimates his own close connection with that resurrection of mankind. The gentler Mary falls at the feet of Jesus, and with many tears expresses the same confidence of his power, had he been present, of averting her brother's death. So deep, however, is their reverence, that neither of them ventures the slightest word of expostulation at his delay; nor does either appear to have entertained the least hope of further relief. The tears of Jesus himself appear to confirm the notion, that the case is utterly desperate; and some of the Jews, in a less kindly spirit, begin to murmur at his apparent neglect of a friend, to whom, nevertheless, he appears so tenderly attached. It should seem that it was in the presence of some of these persons, by no means well-disposed to his cause, that Jesus proceeded to the sepulchre, summoned the dead body to arise, and was obeyed.

The intelligence of this inconceivable event spread with the utmost rapidity to Jerusalem: the Sanhedrin was instantly summoned, and a solemn debate commenced, finally to decide on their future proceedings towards Jesus. It had now become evident that his progress in the popular belief must be at once arrested, or the power of the Sanhedrin, the influence of the Pharisaic party, was lost for ever. With this may have mingled, in minds entirely ignorant of the real nature of the new religion, an honest and conscientious, though blind, dread of some tumult or insurrection taking place, which would give the Romans an excuse for wresting away the lingering semblance of national independence, to which they adhered with such passionate attachment. The high priesthood was now filled by Caiaphas, the son-in-law of Annas or Ananus; for the Roman governors, as has been said, since the expulsion of Archelaus, either in the capricious or venal wantonness of power, or from jealousy of his authority, had perpetually deposed and re-appointed this chief civil and religious magistrate of the nation. Caiaphas threw the weight of his official influence into the scale of the more decided and violent party; and endeavoured, as it were, to give an appearance of patriotism to the meditated crime, by declaring the expediency of sacrificing one life, even though innocent, for the welfare of the whole nation (1). His language was afterwards treasured in the memory of the Christians, as inadvertently prophetic of the more extensive benefits derived to mankind by the death of their Master. The death of Jesus was deliberately decreed; but Jesus

(1) John, xi. 47—53

for the present avoided the gathering storm, withdrew from the neighbourhood of the metropolis, and retired to Ephraim, on the border of Judæa, near the wild and mountainous region which divided Judæa from Samaria (1).

CHAPTER VII.

THE LAST PASSOVER. — THE CRUCIFIXION.

Last Pass-
over.

THE Passover rapidly approached; the roads from all quarters were already crowded with the assembling worshippers. It is difficult for those who are ignorant of the extraordinary power which local religious reverence holds over Southern and Asiatic nations, to imagine the state of Judæa and of Jerusalem at the time of this great periodical festival (2). The rolling onward of countless and gathering masses of population to some of the temples in India; the caravans from all quarters of the Eastern world, which assemble at Mecca during the Holy Season; the multitudes which formerly flowed to Loretto or Rome at the great ceremonies, when the Roman catholic religion held its unenfeebled sway over the mind of Europe—do not surpass, perhaps scarcely equal, the sudden, simultaneous confluence, not of the population of a single city, but of the whole Jewish nation, towards the capital of Judæa at the time of the Passover. Dispersed as they were throughout the world, it was not only the great mass of the inhabitants of Palestine, but many foreign Jews who thronged from every quarter—from Babylonia, from Arabia, from Egypt, from Asia Minor and Greece, from Italy, probably even from Gaul and Spain. Some notion of the density and vastness of the multitude may be formed from the calculation of Josephus, who, having ascertained the number of paschal lambs sacrificed on one of these solemn occasions, which amounted to 256,500 (3); and assigning the ordinary number to a company who could partake of the same victim, estimated the total number of the pilgrims and residents in Jerusalem at 2,700,000. Through all this concourse of the whole Jewish race, animated more or less profoundly, according to their peculiar temperament, with the same national and religious feelings, rumours about the appearance, the conduct, the pretensions, the language of Jesus, could not but have spread abroad, and be communicated with un-

(1) John, xi. 54.

(2) Μύριοι ἀπὸ μυρίων ὄσων πόλειων,
οἱ μὲν διὰ γῆς, οἱ δὲ διὰ θαλάττης, ἐξ
ἀνατολῆς καὶ δύσεως, καὶ ἀρκτου καὶ

μεσημερίας, καθ' ἑκάστην ἑορτὴν εἰς τὸ
ἱερόν καταΐρουσιν. Philo, de Monarch. 821.

(3) Or, according to Mr. Greswell's reading,
266,500.

checked rapidity. The utmost anxiety prevails throughout the whole crowded city and its neighbourhood, to ascertain whether this new prophet—this more, perhaps, than prophet—will, as it were, confront at this solemn period the assembled nation ; or, as on the last occasion, remain concealed in the remote parts of the country. The Sanhedrin are on their guard, and strict injunctions are issued that they may receive the earliest intelligence of his approach, in order that they may arrest him before he has attempted to make any impression on the multitude (1).

Already Jesus had either crossed the Jordan, or descended from the hill country to the north. He had passed through Jericho, where he had been recognised by two blind men as the Son of David, the title of the Messiah, probably the most prevalent among the common people ; and instead of disclaiming the homage, he had rewarded the avowal by the restoration of their sight to the suppliants (2).

On his way from Jericho to Jerusalem, but much nearer to the metropolis, he was hospitably received in the house of a wealthy publican named Zaccheus, who had been so impressed with the report of his extraordinary character, that, being of small stature, he had climbed a tree by the road-side to see him pass by ; and had evinced the sincerity of his belief in the just and generous principles of the new faith, both by giving up at once half of his property to the poor, and offering the amplest restitution to those whom he might have oppressed in the exercise of his function as a publican (3). It is probable that Jesus passed the night, perhaps the whole of the Sabbath, in the house of Zaccheus, and set forth, on the first day of the week, through the villages of Bethphage and Bethany to Jerusalem.

Let us, however, before we trace his progress, pause to ascertain, if possible, the actual state of feeling at this precise period, among the different ranks and orders of the Jews.

Jesus of Nazareth had now, for three years, assumed the character of a public teacher ; his wonderful works were generally acknowledged ; all no doubt considered him as an extraordinary being ; but whether he was the Messiah still, as it were, hung in the balance. His language, plain enough to those who could comprehend the real superiority, the real divinity of his character, was necessarily dark and ambiguous to those who were insensible to the moral beauty of his words and actions. Few, perhaps, beyond his more immediate followers, looked upon him with implicit faith ; many with doubt, even with hope ; perhaps still greater numbers, comprising the more turbulent of the lower class, and almost all

1) John, xi. 55, 57.

2) Matt. xx. 30. ; Mark, x. 46 ; Luke, xviii. 41. 3) Luke, xix. 1-10.

the higher and more influential, with incredulity, if not with undisguised animosity. For, though thus for three years he had kept the public mind in suspense as to his being the promised Redeemer, of those circumstances to which the popular passions had looked forward as the only certain signs of the Messiah's coming; those, which among the mass of the community were considered inseparable from the commencement of the kingdom of heaven—the terrific, the awful, the national, not one had come to pass. The deliverance of the nation from the Roman yoke was as remote as ever; the governor had made but a short time, perhaps a year, before, a terrible assertion of his supremacy, by defiling the Temple itself with the blood of the rebellious or unoffending Galileans. The Sanhedrin, imperious during his absence, quailed and submitted whenever the tribunal of Pilate was erected in the metropolis. The publicans, those unwelcome remembrancers of the subjugation of the country, were still abroad in every town and village, levying the hateful tribute; and instead of joining in the popular clamour against these agents of a foreign rule, or even reprobating their extortions, Jesus had treated them with his accustomed equable gentleness; he had entered familiarly into their houses; one of his constant followers, one of his chosen twelve, was of this proscribed and odious profession.

All sects
hostile to
Jesus.

The Pharisees.

Thus, then, the fierce and violent, the avowed or the secret partisans of the Galilean Judas, and all who without having enrolled themselves in his sect, inclined to the same opinions, if not already enflamed against Jesus, were at least ready to take fire, on the instant that his success might appear to endanger their schemes and visions of independence: and their fanaticism once inflamed, no considerations of humanity or justice would arrest its course, or assuage its violence. To every sect Jesus had been equally unpromising: to the Pharisees he had always proclaimed the most undisguised opposition; and if his language rises from its gentle and persuasive, though authoritative tone, it is ever in inveighing against the hypocrisy, the avarice, the secret vices of this class, whose dominion over the public mind it was necessary to shake with a strong hand; all communion with whose peculiar opinions it was incumbent on the Teacher of purer virtue to disclaim in the most unmeasured terms (1). But this hostility to the Pharisaic party was likely to operate unfavourably to the cause of Jesus, not only with the party itself, but with the great mass of the lower orders. If there be in man a natural love of independence both in thought and action, there is among the vulgar, especially in a nation so superstitious as the Jews, a reverence, even a passionate attachment to religious tyranny. The bondage in which the minute observances

(1) Luke, xi. 39—54

of the traditionists, more like those of the Brahminical Indians than the free and more generous institutes of their Lawgiver, had fettered the whole life of the Jew, was nevertheless a source of satisfaction and pride; and the offer of deliverance from this inveterate slavery would be received by most with unthankfulness or suspicion. Nor can any teacher of religion, however he may appeal to the better feelings and to the reason, without endangering his influence over the common people, permit himself to be outdone in that austerity which they ever consider the sole test of fervour and sincerity. Even those less enslaved to the traditionary observances, the Lawyers (perhaps the religious ancestors of the Karaites) (1), who adhered more closely, and confined their precepts, to the sacred books, must have trembled and recoiled at the manner in which Jesus assumed an authority above that of Moses or the prophets. With the Sadducees Jesus had come less frequently into collision: it is probable that this sect prevailed chiefly among the aristocracy of the larger cities and the metropolis, while Jesus in general mingled with the lower order; and the Sadducees were less regular attendants in the synagogues and schools, where he was wont to deliver his instructions. They, in all likelihood, were less possessed than the rest of the nation with the expectation of the Messiah; at all events they rejected as innovations not merely the Babylonian notions about the angels and the resurrection, which prevailed in the rest of the community, but altogether disclaimed these doctrines, and professed themselves adherents of the original simple Mosaic Theocracy. Hence, though on one or two occasions they appear to have joined in the general confederacy to arrest his progress, the Sadducees in general would look on with contemptuous indifference; and although the declaration of eternal life mingled with the whole system of the teaching of Jesus, yet it was not till his resurrection had become the leading article of the new faith — till Christianity was thus, as it were, committed in irreconcilable hostility with the main principle of their creed — that their opposition took a more active turn; and from the accidental increase of their weight in the Sanhedrin, came into perpetual and terrible collision with the Apostles. The only point of union which the Sadducaic party would possess with the Pharisees would be the most extreme jealousy of the abrogation of the law, the exclusive feeling of its superior sanctity, wisdom, and irreparable authority: on this point the spirit of nationality would draw together these two conflicting parties, who would vie with each other in the patriotic, the religious vigilance with which they would seize on any expression of Jesus, which might imply the abroga-

The Law-
yers.

The Sad-
ducees.

(1) The Karaites among the later Jews were much earlier, though by no means numerous or influential, the protestants of Judaism (see Hist. of Jews). it is probable that a party of this nature existed

tion of the divinely inspired institutes of Moses, or even any material innovation on their strict letter. But, besides the general suspicion that Jesus was assuming an authority above, in some cases contrary to, the law, there were other trifling circumstances which threw doubts on that genuine and uncontaminated Judaism, which the nation in general would have imperiously demanded from their Messiah. There seems to have been some apprehension, as we have before stated, of his abandoning his ungrateful countrymen, and taking refuge among a foreign race; and his conduct towards the Samaritans was directly contrary to the strongest Jewish prejudices. On more than one instance, even if his remarkable conduct and language during his first journey through Samaria had not transpired, he had avowedly discountenanced that implacable national hatred, which no one can ever attempt to allay without diverting it, as it were, on his own head. He had adduced the example of a Samaritan as the only one of the ten lepers (1) who showed either gratitude to his benefactor, or piety to God; and in the exquisite apologue of the good Samaritan, he had placed the Priest and the Levite in a most unfavourable light, as contrasted with the descendant of that hated race.

Jesus the
Messiah.

Yet there could be no doubt that he had already avowed himself to be the Messiah: his harbinger, the Baptist, had proclaimed the rapid, the instantaneous approach of the kingdom of Christ: of that kingdom Jesus himself had spoken as commencing, as having already commenced; but where were the outward, the visible, the undeniable signs of sovereignty? He had permitted himself, both in private and in public, to be saluted as the Son of David, an expression which was equivalent to a claim to the hereditary throne of David: but still to the common eye he appeared the same lowly and unroyal being, as when he first set forth as a teacher through the villages of Galilee. As to the nature of this kingdom, even to his closest followers, his language was most perplexing and contradictory. An unworldly kingdom, a moral dominion, a purely religious community, held together only by the bond of common faith, was so unlike the former intimate union of civil and religious polity—so diametrically opposite to the first principles of their Theocracy—as to be utterly unintelligible. The real nature and design of the new religion seemed altogether beyond their comprehension; and it is most remarkable to trace it, as it slowly dawned on the minds of the Apostles themselves, and gradually, after the death of Jesus, extended its horizon till it comprehended all mankind within its expanding view. To be in the highest sense the religious ancestors of mankind, to be the authors, or at least the agents, in the greatest moral revolution which has taken place in the world; to

(1) Luke, xvii. 18.

obtain an influence over the human mind, as much more extensive than that which had been violently obtained by the arms of Rome, as it was more conducive to the happiness of the human race; to be the teachers and disseminators of doctrines, opinions, sentiments, which slowly incorporating themselves, as it were, with the intimate essence of man's moral being, were to work a gradual but total change—a change which, as to the temporal as well as the eternal destiny of our race, to those who look forward to the simultaneous progress of human civilisation and the genuine religion of Jesus, is yet far from complete—all this was too high, too remote, too mysterious, for the narrow vision of the Jewish people. They, as a nation, were better prepared indeed, by already possessing the rudiments of the new faith, for becoming the willing agents in this divine work; on the other hand they were, in some respects, disqualified by that very distinction, which, by keeping them in rigid seclusion from the rest of mankind, had rendered them, as it were, the faithful depositaries of the great principle of religion, the Unity of God. The peculiar privilege, with which they had been entrusted for the benefit of mankind, had become, as it were, their exclusive property: nor were they willing, indiscriminately, to communicate to others this their own distinctive prerogative.

Those, for such doubtless there were, who pierced, though dimly, through the veil—the more reasoning, the more advanced, the more philosophical,—were little likely to espouse the cause of Jesus with vigour and resolution. Persons of this character are usually too calm, dispassionate, and speculative, to be the active and zealous instruments in a great religious revolution. It is probable that most of this class were either far gone in Oriental mysticism, or in some instances in the colder philosophy of the Greeks. For these Jesus was as much too plain and popular, as he was too gentle and peaceable for the turbulent. He was scarcely more congenial to the severe and ascetic practices of the Essene, than to the fiercer followers of the Galilean Judas. Though the Essene might admire the exquisite purity of his moral teaching, and the uncompromising firmness with which he repressed the vices of all ranks and parties; however he might be prepared for the abrogation of the ceremonial law and the substitution of the religion of the heart for that of the prevalent outward forms, on his side he was too closely bound by his own monastic rules: his whole existence was recluse and contemplative. His religion was so altogether unfitted for aggression, as, however apparently it might coincide with Christianity in some material points, in fact its vital system was repugnant to that of the new faith. Though, after strict investigation, the Essene would admit the numerous candidates who aspired to unite themselves with his cenobitic society, in which no one, according to Pliny's expression, was born, but which was always

The Essene
his.

full, he would never seek proselytes, or use any active means for disseminating his principles; and it is worthy of remark, that almost the only quarter of Palestine which Jesus does not appear to have visited, is the district near the Dead Sea, where the agricultural settlements of the Essenes were chiefly situated.

While the mass of the community were hostile to Jesus, from his deficiency in the more imposing, the warlike, the destructive signs of the Messiah's power and glory; from his opposition to the genius and principles of the prevailing sects; from his want of nationality, both as regarded the civil independence and the exclusive religious superiority of the race of Abraham; and from their own general incapacity for comprehending the moral sublimity of his teaching; additional, and not less influential, motives, conspired to inflame the animosity of the Rulers. Independent of the dread of innovation, inseparable from established governments, they could not but discern the utter incompatibility of their own rule with that of an unworldly Messiah. They must abdicate at once, if not their civil office as magistrates, unquestionably their sovereignty over the public mind; retract much which they had been teaching on the authority of their fathers, the wise men; and submit, with the lowest and most ignorant, to be the humble scholars of the new Teacher. With all this mingled, no doubt, a real apprehension of offending the Roman power. They could not but discern on how precarious a foundation rested not only the feeble shadow of national independence, but even the national existence. A single mandate from the Emperor, not unlikely to be precipitately advised, and relentlessly carried into execution, on the least appearance of tumult, by a governor of so decided a character as Pontius Pilate, might annihilate at once all that remained of their civil, and even of their religious, constitution. If we look forward we find that, during the whole of the period which precedes the last Jewish war, the ruling authorities of the nation pursued the same cautious policy. They were driven into the insurrection, not by their own deliberate determination, but by the uncontrollable fanaticism of the populace. To every overture of peace they lent a willing ear; and their hopes of an honourable capitulation, by which the city might be spared the horrors of a storm, and the Temple be secured from desecration, did not expire, till their party was thinned by the remorseless sword of the Idumean and the assassin, and the Temple had become the stronghold of one of the contending factions. Religious fears might seem to countenance this trembling apprehension of the Roman power, for there is strong ground, both in Josephus and the Talmudic writings, for believing that the current interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel designated the Romans as the predestined destroyers of the Theocracy (1). And however the more enthu-

The Ru-
lers.

(1) It is probable that in the allusion of Jesus to the "abomination of desolation, the phrase

siastic might look upon this only as one of the inevitable calamities which was to precede the appearance and final triumph of the Messiah, the less fervid faith of the older and more influential party was far more profoundly impressed with the dread of the impending ruin, than elated with the remoter hope of final restoration. The advice of Caiaphas, therefore, to sacrifice even an innocent man for the safety of the state, would appear to them both sound and reasonable policy.

We must imagine this suspense, this agitation of the crowded city, or we shall be unable fully to enter into the beauty of the calm and unostentatious dignity with which Jesus pursues his course through the midst of this terrific tumult. He preserves the same equable composure in the triumphant procession into the Temple and in the Hall of Pilate. Every thing indicates his tranquil conviction of his inevitable death ; he foretells it with all its afflicting circumstances to his disciples, incredulous almost to the last to this alone of their Master's declarations. At every step he feels himself more inextricably within the toils ; yet he moves onwards with the self-command of a willing sacrifice, constantly dwelling with a profound, though chastened, melancholy on his approaching fate, and intimating that his death was necessary, in order to secure indescribable benefits for his faithful followers and for mankind. Yet there is no needless exasperation of his enemies ; he observes the utmost prudence, though he seems so fully aware that his prudence can be of no avail ; he never passes the night within the city ; and it is only by the treachery of one of his followers that the Sanhedrin at length make themselves masters of his person.

The Son of Man had now arrived at Bethany, and we must endeavour to trace his future proceedings in a consecutive course (1); but if it has been difficult to dispose the events of the life of Jesus, in the order of time, this difficulty increases as we approach its termination. However embarrassing this fact to those who require something more than historical credibility in the evangelical narratives, to those who are content with a lower and more rational view of their authority, it throws not the least suspicion on their truth. It might almost seem, at the present period, that the Evangelists, confounded as it were, and stunned with the deep sense of the importance of the crisis, however they might remember the facts, had in some degree perplexed and confused their regular order. At Bethany he took up his abode in the house of Simon, who had

Demeanour of Jesus

Difficulty of chronological arrangement.

Jesus at Bethany

was already applied by the popular apprehensions to some impending destruction by the Romans.

Τὸν αὐτὸν τρέπων Δανιήλος καὶ περὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἡγεμονίας ἀνεγὰψε, καὶ οὗτις ὑπ' αὐτῶν ἐρημαθῆσεται, *Ant. x. 2. 7.*, and in the *Bell. Jud. iv. 6. 3.*, the προφήτεια κατὰ τῆς πάτρίδος, referred to his inter-

pretation of the verses of the prophet. Compare *Babyl. Talm. Genara, Masseck Nasir, c. 5.*, *Masseck Sanhedrin, c. 11.*, *Jerusalem Talmud, Masseck Kelaim, c. 9.* Bertholdt on Daniel, p. 585. Compare likewise Jortin's *Eecl. Hist. i. 69*

(1) *Matt. xxi. 1.*; *Mark, xi. 1*; *Luke, xix. 28*; *John, xii. 1*

been a leper, and, it is not improbably conjectured, had been healed by the wonderful power of Jesus (1). Simon was, in all likelihood, closely connected, though the degree of relationship is not intimated, with the family of Lazarus, for Lazarus was present at the feast, and it was conducted by Martha his sister. The fervent devotion of their sister Mary had been already indicated on two occasions; and this passionate zeal, now heightened by gratitude for the recent restoration of her brother to life, evinced itself in her breaking an alabaster box of very costly perfume, and anointing his head (2), according, as we have seen on a former occasion, to a usage not uncommon in Oriental banquets. It is possible that vague thoughts of the royal character, which she expected that Jesus was about to assume, might mingle with those purer feelings which led her to pay this prodigal homage to his person. The mercenary character of Judas now begins to be developed. Judas had been appointed a kind of treasurer, and entrusted with the care of the common purse, from which the scanty necessities of the humble and temperate society had been defrayed, and the rest reserved for distribution among the poor. Some others of the disciples had been seized with astonishment at this unusual and seemingly unnecessary waste of so valuable a commodity: but Judas broke out into open remonstrance; and concealing his own avarice under the veil of charity for the poor, protested against the wanton prodigality. Jesus contented himself with praising the pious and affectionate devotion of the woman, and reverting to his usual tone of calm melancholy, declared that inadvertently she had performed a more pious office, the anointing his body for his burial.

Jesus enters Jerusalem in triumph.

The intelligence of the arrival of Jesus at Bethany spread rapidly to the city, from which it was not quite two miles distant. Multitudes thronged forth to behold him: nor was Jesus the only object of interest, for the fame of the resurrection of Lazarus was widely disseminated, and the strangers in Jerusalem were scarcely less anxious to behold a man who had undergone a fate so unprecedented.

Lazarus thus an object of intense interest to the people (3), became one of no less jealousy to the ruling authorities, the enemies of Jesus. His death was likewise decreed, and the magistracy only awaited a favourable opportunity for the execution of their edicts. But the Sanhedrin is at first obliged to remain in overawed and trembling inactivity. The popular sentiment is so decidedly in favour of Jesus of Nazareth, that they dare not venture to oppose his open, his public, his triumphant procession into the city, or his entrance amid the applauses of the wondering multitude into the

(1) Matt. xxvi. 1—13.; Mark. xiv. 3—9.; John, xii. 1—11. (We follow St. John's narrative in placing this incident at the present period).

(2) See Psalm, xxv. 5. Horat. Carn. ii. 11. 16. Martial, iii. 12. 4.

(3) John, xii. 9—11.

Temple itself. On the morning of the second day of the week (1), Jesus is seen, in the face of day, approaching one of the gates of the city which looked towards Mount Olivet (2). In avowed conformity to a celebrated prophecy of Zachariah, he appears riding on the yet unbroken colt of an ass ; the procession of his followers, as he descends the side of the Mount of Olives, escort him with royal honours, and with acclamations expressive of his title of the Messiah, towards the city : many of them had been witnesses of the resurrection of Lazarus, and no doubt proclaimed, as they advanced, this extraordinary instance of power. They are met (3) by another band advancing from the city, who receive him with equal homage, strew branches of palm and even their garments in his way ; and the Sanhedrin could not but hear within the courts of the Temple, the appalling proclamation, “ Hosannah, blessed is the King of Israel, that cometh in the name of the Lord.” Some of the Pharisees, who had mingled with the multitude, remonstrate with Jesus, and command him to silence what to their ears sounded like the profane, the impious adulation of his partisans. Uninterrupted, and only answering that if these were silent, the stones on which he trod would bear witness, Jesus still advances ; the acclamations become yet louder ; he is hailed as the son of David, the rightful heir of David’s kingdom ; and the desponding Pharisees, alarmed at the complete mastery over the public mind which he appears to possess, withdraw for the present their fruitless opposition. On the declivity of the hill he pauses to behold the city at his feet, and something of that emotion, which afterwards is expressed with much greater fulness, betrays itself in a few brief and emphatic sentences, expressive of the future miserable destiny of the devoted Jerusalem (4).

Monday,
Nisan 2,
March.

The whole crowded city is excited by this increasing tumult ; anxious inquiries about the cause, and the intelligence that it is the entrance of Jesus of Nazareth into the city, still heighten the universal suspense (5) ; and even in the Temple itself, where perhaps the religion of the place, or the expectation, of some public declaration, or perhaps of some immediate sign of his power, had caused a temporary silence among his older followers, the children prolong the acclamations (6) ; and as the sick, the infirm, the afflicted with different maladies, are brought to him to be healed, and are restored at once to health or the use of their faculties, at every instance of the power and goodness of Jesus the same uncontrolled acclamations from the younger part of the multitude are renewed with increasing fervour.

Acclama-
tions in
the Tem-
ple

Those of the Sanhedrin who are present, though they do not attempt at this immediate juncture to stem the torrent, venture to

(1) John, xii. 12.
(2) Matt. xxi. 1—10.; Mark, xi. 1—10.; Luke, xix. 29—40.; John, xii. 12—19.
(3) John, xii. 18

(4) Luke, xix. 41—44.
(5) Matt. xxi. 10, 11.
(6) Ibid. 15.

remonstrate against the disrespect to the sanctity of the Temple, and demand of Jesus to silence, what to their feelings sounded like profane violation of the sacred edifice. Jesus replies, as usual, with an apt quotation from the sacred writings, which declared that even the voices of children and infants might be raised, without reproof, in praise and thanksgiving to God.

The
Greeks.

Among the multitudes of Jews who assembled at the Passover, there were usually many proselytes who were called Greeks (1) (a term in Jewish language of as wide signification as that of barbarians with the Greeks, and including all who were not of Jewish descent). Some of this class, carried away by the general enthusiasm towards Jesus, expressed an anxious desire to be admitted to his presence. It is not improbable that these proselytes might be permitted to advance no further than the division in the outer Court of the Gentiles, where certain palisades were erected, with inscriptions in various languages, prohibiting the entrance of all foreigners; or even if they were allowed to pass this barrier, they may have been excluded from the court of Israel, into which Jesus may have passed. By the intervention of two of the Apostles, their desire is made known to Jesus; who, perhaps as he passes back through the outward court, permits them to approach. No doubt as these proselytes shared in the general excitement towards the person of Jesus, so they shared in the general expectation of the immediate, the instantaneous commencement of the splendour, the happiness of the Messiah's kingdom. To their surprise, either in answer to or anticipating their declaration to this effect, instead of enlarging on the glory of that great event, the somewhat ambiguous language of Jesus dwells, at first on his approaching fate, on the severe trial which awaits the devotion of his followers; yet on the necessity of this humiliation, this dissolution, to his final glory, and to the triumph of his beneficent religion. It rises at length into a devotional address to the Father, to bring immediately to accomplishment all his promises, for the glorification of the Messiah. As he was yet speaking, a rolling sound was heard in the heavens, which the unbelieving part of the multitude heard only as an accidental burst of thunder: to others, however, it seemed an audible, a distinct, or according to those who adhere to the strict letter, the articulate voice (2) of an angel, proclaiming the divine sanction to the presage of his future glory. Jesus continues his discourse in a tone of profounder mystery, yet evidently declaring the immediate discomfiture of the "Prince of this world," the adversary of the Jewish people and of the human race, his own departure from the world, and the important consequences which were to

(1) John, xii. 20. 43.

(2) Kuinoel in loco. Some revert to the Jewish superstition of the Bath-Kol, or audible voice

from heaven; but the more rational of the Jews interpret this Bath-Kol as an impression upon the mind, rather than on the outward senses.

ensue from that departure. After his death, his religion was to be more attractive than during his life. "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." Among the characteristics of the Messiah which were deeply-rooted in the general belief, was the eternity of his reign; once revealed, he was revealed for ever; once established in their glorious, their paradisiacal state, the people of God, the subjects of the kingdom, were to be liable to no change, no vicissitude. The allusions of Jesus to his departure, clashing with this notion of his perpetual presence, heightened their embarrassment; and, leaving them in this state of mysterious suspense, he withdrew unperceived from the multitude, and retired again with his own chosen disciples to the village of Bethany.

The second morning Jesus returned to Jerusalem. A fig-tree stood by the wayside, of that kind well known in Palestine, which during a mild winter preserve their leaves and with the early spring put forth and ripen their fruit (1). Jesus approached the tree to pluck the fruit; but finding that it bore none, condemned it to perpetual barrenness.

Cursing
the barren
fig tree

This transaction is remarkable, as almost the only instance in which Jesus adopted that symbolic mode of teaching by action, rather than by language, so peculiar to the East, and so frequently exemplified in the earlier books, especially of the Prophets. For it is difficult to conceive any reason either for the incident itself, or for its admission into the evangelic narrative at a period so important unless it was believed to convey some profounder meaning. The close moral analogy, the accordance with the common phraseology between the barren tree, disqualified by its hardened and sapless state from bearing its natural produce, and the Jewish nation, equally incapable of bearing the fruits of Christian goodness, formed a most expressive, and, as it were, living apologue.

On this day, Jesus renews the remarkable scene which had taken place at the first Passover. The customary traffic, the tumult and confusion, which his authority had restrained for a short time, had been renewed in the courts of the Temple; and Jesus again expelled the traders from the holy precincts, and, to secure the silence and the sanctity of the whole enclosure, prohibited the carrying any vessel through the Temple courts (2). Through the whole of this day the Sanhedrin, as it were, rested on their arms; they found, with still increasing apprehension, that every hour the multitude crowded with more and more anxious interest around the Prophet of Nazareth; his authority over the Temple courts seems to have

Second
day in Je-
rusalem

(1) There are three kinds of figs in Palestine: 1. the early fig, which blossoms in March, and ripens its fruit in June; 2. the Kerman, which shows its fruit in June, and ripens in August; and, 3. the kind in question. See Kuinoel, in

loco. Pliny. H. N. xvi. 27. Theophr. 3. 6. Shaw's Travels, Matt. xxi. 18, 19.; Mark, xi. 12. 14

(2) Matt. xxi. 12. 13.; Luke, xix. 45. 46 Mark, xi. 15. 17

been admitted without resistance; and probably the assertion of the violated dignity of the Temple was a point on which the devotional feelings would have been so strongly in favour of the Reformer, that it would have been highly dangerous and unwise for the magistrates to risk even the appearance either of opposition or of dissatisfaction.

The third
day.

The third morning arrived. As Jesus passed to the Temple, the fig-tree, the symbol of the Jewish nation, stood utterly withered and dried up. But, as it were, to prevent the obvious inference from the immediate fulfilment of his malediction,—almost the only destructive act during his whole public career, and that on a tree by the wayside, the common property,—Jesus mingles with his promise of power to his Apostles to perform acts as extraordinary, the strictest injunctions to the milder spirit inculcated by his precept and his example. Their prayers were to be for the forgiveness, not for the providential destruction, of their enemies.

Deputa-
tion from
the rulers.

The Sanhedrin had now determined on the necessity of making an effort to discredit Jesus with the more and more admiring multitude. A deputation arrives to demand by what authority he had taken up his station, and was daily teaching in the Temple, had expelled the traders, and, in short, had usurped a complete superiority over the accredited and established instructors of the people (1)? The self-command and promptitude of Jesus caught them, as it were, in their own toils, and reduced them to the utmost embarrassment. The claim of the Baptist to the prophetic character had been generally admitted and even passionately asserted; his death had, no doubt, still further endeared him to all who detested the Herodian rule, or who admired the uncompromising boldness with which he had condemned iniquity even upon the throne. The popular feeling would have resented an impeachment on his prophetic dignity. When, therefore, Jesus demanded their sentence as to the Baptism of John, they had but the alternative of acknowledging its divine sanction, and so tacitly condemning themselves for not having submitted to his authority, and even for not admitting his testimony in favour of Jesus; or of exposing themselves, by denying it, to popular insult and fury. The self-degrading confession of their ignorance, placed Jesus immediately on the vantage ground, and at once annulled their right to question or to decide upon the authority of his mission,—that right which was considered to be vested in the Sanhedrin. They were condemned to listen to language still more humiliating. In two striking parables, that of the Lord of the Vineyard, and of the Marriage Feast (2), Jesus not obscurely intimated the rejection of those labourers who had been first summoned to the work of God; of those guests who

(1) Matt. xxi. 23—27.; Mark, xi. 27—34.,
Luke, xx. 1—8.

(2) Matt. xxi. 28. to xxii. 14.; Mark, xii. 1—
12.; Luke, xx. 9—18.

had been first invited to the nuptial banquet; and the substitution of meaner and most unexpected guests or subjects in their place.

The fourth day (1) arrived; and once more Jesus appeared in the Temple with a still increasing concourse of followers. No unfavourable impression had yet been made on the popular mind by his adversaries; his career is yet unchecked; his authority unshaken.

The fourth day.

His enemies are now fully aware of their own desperate situation; the apprehension of the progress of Jesus unites the most discordant parties into one formidable conspiracy; the Pharisaic, the Sadducaic, and the Herodian factions agree to make common cause against the common enemy: the two national sects, the Traditionists, and the Antitraditionists, no longer hesitate to accept the aid of the foreign or Herodian faction (2). Some suppose the Herodians to have been the officers and attendants on the court of Herod, then present at Jerusalem; but the appellation more probably includes all those who, estranged from the more inveterate Judaism of the nation, and having, in some degree, adopted Grecian habits and opinions, considered the peace of the country best secured by the government of the descendants of Herod, with the sanction and under the protection of Rome (3). They were the foreign faction, and as such, in general, in direct opposition to the Pharisaic, or national party. But the success of Jesus, however at present it threatened more immediately the ruling authorities in Jerusalem, could not but endanger the Galilean government of Herod. The object, therefore, was to implicate Jesus with the faction, or at least to tempt him into acknowledging opinions similar to those of the Galilean demagogue, a scheme the more likely to work on the jealousy of the Roman government, if it was at the last Passover that the apprehension of tumult among the Galilean strangers had justified, or appeared to justify, the massacre perpetrated by Pilate. The plot was laid with great subtlety; for either way Jesus, it appeared, must commit himself. The great test of the Galilean opinion was, the lawfulness of tribute to a foreign power; which Judas had boldly declared to be not merely a base compromise of the national independence, but an impious infringement on the first principles of their theocracy. But the independence, if not the

The Herodians.

(1) There is considerable difficulty in ascertaining the events of the Wednesday. It does not appear altogether probable that Jesus should have remained at Bethany in perfect inactivity or seclusion during the whole of this important day: either, therefore, as some suppose, the triumphant entry into Jerusalem took place on the Monday, not on the Sunday, according to the common tradition of the church; or, as here stated, the collision with his various adversaries spread over the succeeding day.

(2) Matt. xxii. 15—22.; Mark, xii. 13—17.; Luke, xxi. 18—26.

(3) Of all notions on the much-contested point of the Herodians, the most improbable is that which identifies them with the followers of the Galilean Judas. The whole policy of the Herodian family was in diametrical hostility to those opinions. They maintained their power by foreign influence, and, with the elder Herod, had systematically attempted to soften the implacable hostility of the nation by the introduction of Grecian manners. Their object accordingly was, to convert Jesus of the Galilean opinions, which they themselves held in the utmost detestation.

universal dominion of the Jews was inseparably bound up with the popular belief in the Messiah. Jesus, then, would either, on the question of the lawfulness of tribute to Cæsar, confirm the bolder doctrines of the Galilean, and so convict himself, before the Romans, as one of that dangerous faction; or he would admit its legality, and so annul at once all his claims to the character of the Messiah. Not in the least thrown off his guard by the artful courtesy, or rather the adulation of their address, Jesus appeals to the current coin of the country, which, bearing the impress of the Roman emperor, was in itself a recognition of Roman supremacy (1).

The Sadducees.

The Herodian or political party thus discomfited, the Sadducees advanced to the encounter. Nothing can appear more captious or frivolous than their question with regard to the future possession of a wife in another state of being, who had been successively married to seven brothers, according to the Levirate law. But, perhaps, considered in reference to the opinions of the time, it will seem less extraordinary. The Sadducees, no doubt, had heard that the resurrection and the life to come, had formed an essential tenet in the teaching of Jesus. They concluded that his notions on these subjects were those generally prevalent among the people. But, if the later Rabbinical notions of the happiness of the renewed state of existence, were current or even known in their general outline, nothing could be more gross or unspiritual (2): if less voluptuous, they were certainly not less strange and unreasonable, than those which perhaps were derived from the same source—the Paradise of Mahomet. The Sadducees were accustomed to contend with these disputants, whose paradisaical state, to be established by the Messiah, after the resurrection, was but the completion of those temporal promises in the book of Deuteronomy, a perpetuity of plenty, fertility, and earthly enjoyment (3). The answer of Jesus, while it declares the certainty of another state of existence, carefully purifies it from all these corporeal and earthly images; and assimilates man, in another state of existence, to a higher order of beings. And in his concluding inference from the passage in Exodus, in which God is described as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the allusion may perhaps be still kept up. The temporal and corporeal resurrection of the common Pharisaic belief was to take place only after the coming of the Messiah; yet their reverence for the fathers of the race, would scarcely allow even the Sadducee to

(1) The latter part of the sentence. "Render therefore unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," and "to God the things that are God's," refers, in all probability, to the payment of the Temple tribute, which was only received in the coin of the country. Hence, as before observed, the money changers in the temple, Matt., xxii. 23—33.; Mark, xii. 18—27.; Luke, x. 27—38.

(2) It is decided, in the *Sohar* on Genesis, fol.

24. col. 96., "that woman, who has married two husbands in this world, is restored to the first in the world to come." Schoetgen in loco.

(3) Josephus, in his address to his countrymen, mingles up into one splendid picture the Metempsychosis and the Elysium of the Greeks. In Schoetgen, in loco, may be found extracts from the Talmud, of a purer character, and more resembling the language of our Lord.

suppose their total extinction. The actual, the pure beatitude of the Patriarchs, was probably an admitted point; if not formally decided by their teachers, implicitly admitted, and fervently embraced by the religious feelings of the whole people. But if, according to the Sadducaic principle, the soul did not exist independent of the body, even Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had shared the common fate, the favour of God had ceased with their earthly dissolution; nor in the time of Moses could he be justly described as the God of those, who in death had sunk into utter annihilation.

Although now engaged in a common cause, the hostility of the Pharisaic party to the Sadducees, could not but derive gratification from their public discomfiture. One scribe of their party is so struck by the superiority of Jesus, that, though still with something of an insidious design, he demands in what manner he should rank the commandments, which in popular belief were probably of equal dignity and importance (1). But when Jesus comprises the whole of religion under the simple precepts of the love of God and the love of man, he is so struck with the sublimity of the language, that he does not hesitate openly to espouse his doctrines.

Paralysed by this desertion, and warned by the discomfiture of the two parties which had preceded them in dispute with Jesus, the Pharisees appear to have stood wavering and uncertain how to speak or act. Jesus seizes the opportunity of still further weakening their authority with the assembled multitude; and, in his turn, addresses an embarrassing question as to the descent of the Messiah (2). The Messiah, according to the universal belief, would be the heir and representative of David: Jesus, by a reference to the second Psalm, which was considered prophetic of the Redeemer, forces them to confess that, even according to their own authority, the kingdom of the Messiah was to be of far higher dignity, far wider extent, and administered by a more exalted sovereign than David, for even David himself, by their own admission, had called him his Lord.

The Ph.
risees

The Pharisees withdrew in mortified silence, and for that time abandoned all hope of betraying him into any incautious or unpopular denial by their captious questions. But they withdrew unmoved by the wisdom, unattracted by the beauty, unsubdued by the authority of Jesus.

After some delay, during which the beautiful incident of his approving the charity of the poor widow (3), who cast her mite into the treasury of the Temple, took place, he addressed the wondering multitude, ("for common people heard him gladly") (4) in a grave and solemn denunciation against the tyranny, the hypo-

(1) Matt. xxii. 34—40.; Mark, xii. 28—40. .
Luke, xx. 39, 40.

(2) Matt. xxii. 41—46. , Mark, xii. 35—37. .
Luke, xx. 39—44

(3) Mark, xii. 41—44.; Luke xxi. 1—4.

(4) "And the common people heard him gladly."

—Mark, xii. 37.

crisy, the bigoted attachment to the most minute observances, and at the same time the total blindness to the spirit of religion, which actuated that great predominant party. He declared them possessed with the same proud and inhuman spirit, which had perpetually bedewed the city with the blood of the Prophets (1). Jerusalem had thus for ever rejected the mercy of God.

This appalling condemnation was, as it were, the final declaration of war against the prevailing religion; it declared that the new doctrines could not harmonise with minds so inveterately wedded to their own narrow bigotry; but even yet the people were not altogether estranged from Jesus, and in that class in which the Pharisaic interest had hitherto despotically ruled, it appeared as it were trembling for its existence.

The crisis,
in the fate
of Jesus.

And now every thing indicated the approaching, the immediate crisis. Although the populace were so decidedly, up to the present instant, in his favour,—though many of the ruling party were only withholden by the dread of that awful sentence of excommunication, which inflicted civil, almost religious death (2), from avowing themselves his disciples,—yet Jesus never entered the Temple again: the next time he appeared before the people, was as a prisoner, as a condemned malefactor. As he left the Temple, a casual expression of admiration from some of his followers, at the magnificence and solidity of the building, and the immense size of the stones of which it was formed, called forth a prediction of its impending ruin; which was expanded, to four of his Apostles, into a more detailed and circumstantial description of its appalling fate, as he sat, during the evening upon the Mount of Olives (3).

Jesus on
the Mount
of Olives.

Evening
view of
Jerusalem
and the
Temple.

It is impossible to conceive a spectacle of greater natural or moral sublimity, than the Saviour seated on the slope of the Mount of Olives, and thus looking down, almost for the last time, on the whole Temple and city of Jerusalem, crowded as it then was with near three millions of worshippers. It was evening, and the whole irregular outline of the city, rising from the deep glens, which encircled it on all sides, might be distinctly traced. The sun, the significant emblem of the great Fountain of moral light, to which Jesus and his faith had been perpetually compared, may be imagined sinking behind the western hills, while its last rays might linger on the broad and massy fortifications on Mount Sion, on the stately palace of Herod, on the square tower, the Antonia, at the corner of the Temple, and on the roof of the Temple, fretted all over with golden spikes, which glittered like fire; while below, the colonnades and lofty gates would cast their broad shadows over the courts, and afford that striking contrast between vast masses of gloom, and

(1) Matt. xxlii.; Mark, xii. 38—40.; Luke, xx. 45—47. (3) Matt. xxiv. xxv.; Mark, xliii. Luke, xxi. 5—38.

(2) See His. of the Jews, vol. iii p. 111—147.

gleams of the richest light, which only an evening scene, like the present, can display. Nor, indeed, (even without the sacred and solemn associations connected with the holy city,) would it be easy to conceive any natural situation in the world of more impressive grandeur, or likely to be seen with greater advantage under the influence of such accessories, than that of Jerusalem, seated, as it was, upon hills of irregular height, intersected by bold ravines, and hemmed in almost on all sides by still loftier mountains, and itself formed, in its most conspicuous parts, of gorgeous ranges of Eastern architecture, in all its lightness, luxuriance, and variety. The effect may have been heightened by the rising of the slow volumes of smoke from the evening sacrifices, while even at the distance of the slope of Mount Olivet, the silence may have been faintly broken by the hymns of the worshippers.

Yet the fall of that splendid edifice was inevitable; the total demolition of all those magnificent and time-hallowed structures might not be averted. It was necessary to the complete development of the designs of Almighty Providence for the welfare of mankind in the promulgation of Christianity. Independent of all other reasons, the destruction certainly of the Temple, and if not of the city, at least of the city as the centre and metropolis of a people, the only true and exclusive worshippers of the one Almighty Creator, seemed essential to the progress of the new faith. The universal and comprehensive religion to be promulgated by Christ and his Apostles, was grounded on the abrogation of all local claims to peculiar sanctity, of all distinctions of one nation above another, as possessing any especial privilege in the knowledge or favour of the Deity. The time was come when "neither in Jerusalem nor on the mountain of Gerizim," was the great Universal Spirit to be worshipped with circumscribed or local homage. As long, however, as the Temple on Mount Moriah remained hallowed by the reverence of ages, sanctified, according to the general belief, for perpetuity, by the especial command of God, as his peculiar dwelling-place; so long, among the Jews at least, and even among other nations, the true principle of Christian worship might be counteracted by the notion of the inalienable sanctity of this one place. Judaism would scarcely be entirely annulled, as long as the Temple rose in its original majesty and veneration.

Necessity
for the
destruction
of the
Temple at
Jerusalem.

Yet, notwithstanding this absolute necessity for its destruction, notwithstanding that it thus stood, as it were, in the way of the progress of human improvement and salvation, the Son of Man does not contemplate its ruin without emotion. And in all the superhuman beauty of the character of Jesus, nothing is more affecting and impressive, than the profound melancholy with which he foretells the future desolation of the city, which, before two days were passed, was to reek with his own blood. Nor should we do

Jesus con-
templates
with sad-
ness the
future
ruin of
Jerusalem.

justice to this most remarkable incident in his life, if we should consider it merely as a sudden emotion of compassion, as the natural sensation of sadness at the decay or dissolution of that which has long worn the aspect of human grandeur. It seems rather a wise and far-sighted consideration, not merely of the approaching guilt and future penal doom of the city, but of the remoter moral causes, which, by forming the national character, influence the national destiny; the long train of events, the wonderful combination of circumstances, which had gradually wrought the Jewish people to that sterner frame of mind, which was about to display itself with such barbarous, such fatal ferocity. Jesus might seem not merely to know what was in man, but how it entered into man's heart and mind. His was divine charity, enlightened by infinite wisdom.

The ruin
of the Jews
the conse-
quence of
their
character.

In fact, there was an intimate moral connection between the murder of Jesus and the doom of the Jewish city. It was the same national temperament, the same characteristic disposition of the people, which now morally disqualified them "from knowing," in the language of Christ, "the things which belonged unto their peace," which forty years afterwards committed them in their deadly and ruinous struggle with the masters of the world. Christianity alone could have subdued or mitigated that stubborn fanaticism, which drove them at length to their desperate collision with the arms of Rome. As Christians, the Jewish people might have subsided into peaceful subjects of the universal empire. They might have lived, as the Christians did, with the high and inalienable consolations of faith and hope under the heaviest oppressions; and calmly awaited the time when their holier and more beneficent ambition might be gratified by the submission of their rulers to the religious dominion founded by Christ and his Apostles. They would have slowly won that victory by the patient heroism of martyrdom, and the steady perseverance in the dissemination of their faith, which it was madness to hope that they could ever obtain by force of arms. As Jews, they were almost sure, sooner or later, to provoke the implacable vengeance of their foreign rulers. The same vision of worldly dominion, the same obstinate expectation of a temporal Deliverer, which made them unable to comprehend the nature of the redemption to be wrought by the presence, and the kingdom to be established by the power, of Christ, continued to the end to mingle with their wild and frantic resistance.

Immediate
causes of
the rejection
of
Jesus by
the Jews.

In the rejection and murder of Jesus, the Rulers, as their interests and authority were more immediately endangered, were more deeply implicated than the people; but unless the mass of the people had been blinded by these false notions of the Messiah, they would not have demanded, or at least, with the general voice, assented to the sacrifice of Jesus. The progress of Jesus at the

present period in the public estimation, his transient popularity, arose from the enforced admiration of his commanding demeanour, the notoriety of his wonderful works, perhaps, for such language is always acceptable to the common ear, from his bold animadversions on the existing authorities; but it was no doubt supported in the mass of the populace by a hope, that even yet he would conform to the popular views of the Messiah's character. Their present brief access of faith would not have stood long against the continued disappointment of that hope : and it was no doubt by working on the reaction of this powerful feeling, that the Sanhedrin were able so suddenly, and, it almost appears, so entirely, to change the prevailing sentiment. Whatever the proverbial versatility of the popular mind, there must have been some chord strung to the most sensitive pitch, the slightest touch of which would vibrate through the whole frame of society, and madden at least a commanding majority to their blind concurrence in this revolting iniquity. Thus in the Jewish nation, but more especially in the prime movers, the Rulers and the heads of the Pharisaic party, the murder of Jesus was an act of unmitigated cruelty, but, as we have said, it arose out of the generally fierce and bigoted spirit, which morally incapacitated the whole people from discerning the evidence of his mission from heaven, in his acts of divine goodness, as well as of divine power. It was an act of religious fanaticism; they thought, in the language of Jesus himself, that they were "doing God service" when they slew the Master, as much as afterwards when they persecuted his followers.

When however the last, and as far as the existence of the nation, the most fatal display of this fanaticism took place, it was accidentally allied with nobler motives, with generous impatience of oppression, and the patriotic desire of national independence. However desperate and frantic the struggle against such irresistible power, the unprecedented tyranny of the later Roman procurators, Festus, Albinus, and Florus, might almost have justified the prudence of manly and resolute insurrection. Yet in its spirit and origin it was the same; and it is well known that even to the last, during the most sanguinary and licentious tumults in the Temple as well as the city, they never entirely lost sight of a deliverance from Heaven : God, they yet thought, would interpose in behalf of his chosen people. In short, the same moral state of the people (for the Rulers for obvious reasons were less forward in the resistance to the Romans), the same temperament and disposition now led them to reject Jesus and demand the release of Barabbas, which, forty years later, provoked the unrelenting vengeance of Titus, and deluged their streets with the blood of their own citizens. Even after the death of Jesus, this spirit might have been allayed, but only by a complete abandonment of all the motives

which led to his crucifixion—by the general reception of Christianity in all its meekness, humility, and purity—by the tardy substitution of the hope of a moral, for that of temporal dominion. This unhappily was not the case : but it must be left to Jewish history to relate how the circumstances of the times, instead of assuaging or subduing, exasperated the people into madness ; instead of predisposing to Christianity, confirmed the inveterate Judaism, and led at length to the accomplishment of their anticipated doom.

Altogether, then, it is evident, that it was this brooding hope of sovereignty, at least of political independence, moulded up with religious enthusiasm, and lurking, as it were, in the very heart's core of the people, which rendered it impossible that the pure, the gentle, the humane, the unworldly and comprehensive, doctrines of Jesus should be generally received, or his character appreciated by a nation in that temper of mind ; and the nation who could thus incur the guilt of his death, were prepared to precipitate themselves to such a fate, as at length it suffered.

Distinctness, with which Jesus prophesied the fall of Jerusalem.

Hence political sagacity might, perhaps, have anticipated the crisis, which could only be averted, by that which was morally impossible, the simultaneous conversion of the whole people to Christianity. Yet the distinctness, the minuteness, the circumstantial accuracy, with which the prophetic outline of the siege and fall of Jerusalem is drawn, bear, perhaps, greater evidence of more than human foreknowledge, than any other in the sacred volume : and in fact this profound and far-sighted wisdom, this anticipation of the remote political consequences of the reception or rejection of his doctrines, supposing Jesus but an ordinary human being, would be scarcely less extraordinary than prophecy itself.

Embarrassment of the Sanhedrin.

Still though determined, at all hazards, to suppress the growing party of Jesus, the Sanhedrin were greatly embarrassed as to their course of proceeding. Jesus invariably passed the night without the walls, and only appeared during the daytime, though with the utmost publicity, in the Temple. His seizure in the Temple, especially during the festival, would almost inevitably lead to tumult, and (since it was yet doubtful on which side the populace would array themselves) tumult as inevitably to the prompt interference of the Roman authority. The Procurator, on the slightest indication of disturbance, without inquiring into the guilt or innocence of either party, might coerce both with equal severity ; or, even without further examination, let loose the guard, always mounted in the gallery which connected the fortress of Antonia with the north-western corner of the Temple, to mow down both the conflicting parties in indiscriminate havoc. He might thus mingle the blood of all present, as he had done that of the Galileans, with the sacrificial offerings. To discover then where Jesus might

be arrested without commotion or resistance from his followers, so reasonably to be apprehended, the treachery of one of his more immediate disciples was absolutely necessary; yet this was an event, considering the commanding influence possessed by Jesus over his followers, rather to be desired than expected.

On a sudden, however, appeared within their court one of the chosen Twelve, with a voluntary offer of assisting them in the apprehension of his Master (1). Much ingenuity has been displayed by some recent writers in attempting to palliate, or rather to account, for this extraordinary conduct of Judas; but the language in which Jesus spake of the crime, appears to confirm the common opinion of its enormity. It has been suggested, either that Judas might expect Jesus to put forth his power, even after his apprehension, to elude or to escape from his enemies, and thus his avarice might calculate on securing the reward without being an accomplice in absolute murder, at once betraying his Master and defrauding his employers. According to others still higher motives may have mingled with his love of gain: he may have supposed, that by thus involving Jesus in difficulties otherwise inextricable, he would leave him only the alternative of declaring himself openly and authoritatively to be the Messiah, and so force him to the tardy accomplishment of the ambitious visions of his partisans. It is possible that the traitor may not have contemplated, or may not have permitted himself clearly to contemplate, the ultimate consequences of his crime: he may have indulged the vague hope, that if Jesus were really the Messiah, he bore, if we may venture the expression, "a charmed life," and was safe in his inherent immortality (a notion in all likelihood inseparable from that of the Deliverer), from the malice of his enemies. If he were not, the crime of his betrayal would not be of very great importance. There were other motives which would concur with the avarice of Judas; the rebuke which he had received when he expostulated about the waste of the ointment, if it had not excited any feeling of exasperation against his Master, at least showed that his character was fully understood by him. He must have felt himself out of his element among the more honest and sincere disciples; nor can he have been actuated by any real or profound veneration for the exquisite perfection of a character so opposite to his own: and thus insincere and doubting, he may have shrunk from the approaching crisis, and as he would seize any means of extricating himself from that cause which had now become so full of danger, his covetousness would direct him to those means which would at once secure his own personal safety, and obtain the price, the thirty pieces of silver (2), set by public proclamation, on the head of Jesus.

(1) Matt. xxvi. 14—16.; Mark, xiv. 10—11.; Luke, xxii. 2—6.

(2) The thirty pieces of silver (shekels) are estimated at 3*l.* 10*s.* 8*d.* of our present money. It

Nor is the desperate access of remorse, which led to the public restitution of the reward, and to the suicide of the traitor, irreconcilable with the unmitigated heinousness of the treachery. Men meditate a crime, of which the actual perpetration overwhelms them with horror. The general detestation, of which, no doubt, Judas could not but be conscious, not merely among his former companions, the followers of Jesus, but even among the multitude; the supercilious coldness of the Sanhedrin, who having employed him as their instrument, treat his recantation with the most contemptuous indifference, might overstrain the firmest, and work upon the basest mind : and even the unexampled sufferings, and tranquil endurance of Jesus, however he may have calmly surveyed them when distant, and softened and subdued by his imagination, when present to his mind in their fearful reality, forced by the busy tongue of rumour upon his ears, perhaps not concealed from his sight, might drive him to desperation, little short of insanity (1).

The Pass-
over.

It was on the last evening (2) but one before the death of Jesus that the fatal compact was made : the next day, the last of his life, Jesus determines on returning to the city to celebrate the Feast of the Passover : his disciples are sent to occupy a room prepared for the purpose (3). His conduct and language before and during the whole repast clearly indicate his preparation for inevitable death (4). His washing the feet of the disciples, his prediction of his betrayal, his intimation to Judas that he is fully aware of his design, his quiet dismissal of the traitor from the assembly, his institution of the second characteristic ordinance of the new religion, his allusions in that rite to the breaking of his body, and the pouring forth of his blood, his prediction of the denial of Peter, his final address to his followers, and his prayer before he left the chamber, are all deeply impregnated with the solemn melancholy, yet calm and unalterable composure, with which he looks forward to all the terrible details

The Last
Supper.

was the sun named in the law (Exod. xxi. 32.), as the value of the life of a slave; and it has been supposed that the Sanhedrin were desirous of showing their contempt for Jesus by the mean price that they offered for his head.

Perhaps, when we are embarrassed at the smallness of the sum covenanted for and received by Judas, we are imperceptibly influenced by our own sense of the incalculable importance of those consequences which arose out of the treachery of Judas. The service which he performed for this sum was, after all, no more than giving information as to the time and place in which Jesus might be seized among a few disciples without fear of popular tumult, conducting their officers to the spot where he might be found, and designating his person when they arrived at that spot.

(1) Matt. xxvi. 17—29; Mark, xiv. 12—25; Luke, vii. 38; John, xiii. to end of xvii.

(2) After two days was the Passover, in Jewish phraseology implies on the second day after.

(3) All houses, according to Josephus, were freely open to strangers during the Passover, no

payment was received for lodging. The Talmudic writings confirm this :—"The master of the family received the skins of sacrifice. It is a custom that a man leave his earthen jug, and also the skin of his sacrifices to his host." The Gloss. The inhabitants did not let out their houses at a price to them that came up to the feasts, but granted them to them gratis. Light-foot, vol. x. 44.

(4) Of all difficulties, that concerning which we arrive at the least satisfactory conclusion, is the apparent anticipation of the Passover by Christ. The fact is clear that Jesus celebrated the Passover on the Thursday, the leading Jews on the Friday; the historical evidence of this in the Gospels is unanswerable, independent of all theological reasoning. The reason of this difference is and must, we conceive, remain undecided. Whether it was an act of supreme authority assumed by Jesus, whether there was any schism about the right day, whether that schism was between the Pharisaic and Anti-Pharisaic party, or between the Jews and Galileans, all is purely conjectural.

of his approaching, his almost immediate, sufferings. To his followers he makes, as it were, the valedictory promise, that his religion would not expire at his death, that his place would be filled by a mysterious Comforter, who was to teach, to guide, to console.

This calm assurance of approaching death in Jesus is the more striking when contrasted with the inveterately Jewish notions of the Messiah's kingdom, which even yet possess the minds of the Apostles. They are now fiercely contesting (1) for their superiority in that earthly dominion, which even yet they suppose on the eve of its commencement. Nor does Jesus at this time altogether correct these erroneous notions, but in some degree falls into the prevailing language, to assure them of the distinguished reward which awaited his more faithful disciples. After inculcating the utmost humility by an allusion to the lowly fraternal service which he had just before performed in washing their feet, he describes the happiness and glory which they are at length to attain, by the strong, and no doubt familiar, imagery, of their being seated on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

The festival was closed according to the usage with the second part of the Hallel (2), the Psalms, from the 113th to the 118th inclusive, of which the former were customarily sung at the commencement, the latter at the end, of the paschal supper. Jesus with his disciples again departed from the room in the city (3) where the feast had been held, probably down the street of the Temple, till they came to the valley : they crossed the brook of Kidron, and began to ascend the slope of the Mount of Olives. Within the city no open space was left for gardens (4) ; but the whole neighbourhood of Jerusalem was laid out in inclosures for the convenience and enjoyment of the inhabitants. The historian of the war relates, not without feelings of poignant sorrow, the havoc made among these peaceful retreats by the devastating approaches of the Roman army (5). Jesus turned aside into one of these inclosures (6), which, it should seem from the subsequent history, was a place of customary retreat, well-known to his immediate followers. The early hours of the night were passed by him in retired and devotional meditation, while the weary disciples are overpowered by involuntary slumber. Thrice Jesus returns to them, and each time he finds them sleeping. But to him it was no hour of quiet or repose. In the solitary garden of Gethsemane, Jesus, who in public, though confronting danger and suffering neither with stoical indifference,

Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane.

(1) Luke, xxii. 24—30.

(2) Buxtorf, *Lex Talmudica*, p. 613. Lightfoot in loco.

(3) Matt. xxvi. 30—56.; Mark, xiv. 32—52.; Luke, xxii. 39—53.; John, xviii. 1.

(4) Lightfoot's derivations of some of the

places on Mount Olivet are curious :—Beth-hana the place of dates ; Beth-phage the place of green figs ; Geth-semane the place of oil presses.

(5) *Hist. of the Jews*, iii. 13.

(6) Matt. xxvi. 36—46.; Mark, xiv. 32—42..

Luke, xxii. 41—46.; John, xviii. 1.

nor with the effort of a strong mind working itself up to the highest moral courage, but with a settled dignity, a calm and natural superiority, now, as it were, endured the last struggle of human nature. The whole scene of his approaching trial, his inevitable death, is present to his mind, and for an instant he prays to the Almighty Father to release him from the task, which, however of such importance to the welfare of mankind, is to be accomplished by such fearful means. The next instant, however, the momentary weakness is subdued, and though the agony is so severe that the sweat falls like large drops of blood to the ground, resigns himself at once to the will of God. Nothing can heighten the terrors of the coming scene so much, as its effect, in anticipation, on the mind of Jesus himself.

Betrayal
of Jesus.

The devotions of Jesus and the slumbers of his followers, as midnight approached, were rudely interrupted. Jesus had rejoined his, now awakened, disciples for the last time ; he had commanded them to rise, and be prepared for the terrible event. Still, no doubt, incredulous of the sad predictions of their Master — still supposing that his unbounded power would secure him from any attempt of his enemies, they beheld the garden filled with armed men, and gleaming with lamps and torches (1). Judas advances and makes the signal which had been agreed on, saluting his Master with the customary mark of respect, a kiss on the cheek, for which he receives the calm but severe rebuke of Jesus for thus treacherously abusing this mark of familiarity and attachment : “ Judas, betrayest thou the son of Man with a kiss ? ” The tranquil dignity of Jesus overawed the soldiers who first approached ; they were most likely ignorant of the service on which they were employed ; and when Jesus announces himself as the object of their search, they shrink back in astonishment, and fall to the earth. Jesus however, covenanting only for the safe dismissal of his followers, readily surrenders himself to the guard. The fiery indignation of Peter, who had drawn his sword, and endeavoured, at least by his example, to incite the few adherents of Jesus to resistance, is repressed by the command of his Master : his peaceful religion disclaims all alliance with the acts or the weapons of the violent. The man (2) whose ear had been struck off, was instantaneously healed ; and Jesus, with no more than a brief and calm remonstrance against this ignominious treatment, against this arrestation, not in the face of day, in the public Temple, but at night, and with arms in their hands, as though he had been a robber, allows himself to be led back, without resistance, into the city. His panic-stricken followers disperse on all sides, and Jesus is left forsaken and alone, amid his mortal enemies.

Jesus led
prisoner
to the city.

(1) Matt xxvi. 47—56. ; Mark, xiv. 43—50. ; Luke, xxii. 47—53. ; John, xviii. 2—11.

(2) It is a curious observation of Semler, that St. John alone gives the name of the servant of

the High Priest, Malchus ; and John, it appears, was known to some of the household of the chief magistrate.

The caprice, the jealousy, or the prudence, of the Roman government, we have before observed, had in no point so frequently violated the feelings of the subject nation, as in the deposition of the High Priest, and the appointment of a successor to the office, in whom they might hope to place more implicit confidence. The stubbornness of the people, revolted by this wanton insult, persisted in honouring with the title those whom they could not maintain in the post of authority ; all who had borne the office retained, in common language, the appellation of High Priest, if indeed the appellation was not still more loosely applied. Probably the most influential man in Jerusalem at this time was Annas, or Ananus, four of whose sons in turn either had been, or were subsequently, elevated to that high dignity, now filled by his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

The High Priest.

The house of Annas was the first place (1) to which Jesus was led, either that the guard might receive further instructions, or perhaps as the place of the greatest security, while the Sanhedrin was hastily summoned to meet at that untimely hour, towards midnight or soon after in the house of Caiaphas. Before the houses of the more wealthy in the East, or rather within the outer porch, there is usually a large square open court, in which public business is transacted, particularly by those who fill official stations. Into such a court, before the palace of Caiaphas, Jesus was led by the soldiers, and Peter following unnoticed amid the throng, lingered before the porch until John, who happened to be familiarly known to some of the High Priest's servants, obtained permission for his entrance (2).

House of Annas

The first process seems to have been a private examination (3), perhaps while the rest of the Sanhedrin were assembling, before the High Priest. He demanded of Jesus the nature of his doctrines, and the character of his disciples. Jesus appealed to the publicity of his teaching, and referred him to his hearers for an account of the tenets which he had advanced. He had no secret doctrines, either of tumult or sedition ; he had ever spoken “ in public, in the synagogue, or in the Temple.” And now the fearful scene of personal insult and violence began. An officer of the High Priest, enraged at the calm composure with which Jesus answered the interrogatory, struck him on the mouth (beating him on the mouth, sometimes with the hand, more often with a thong of leather or a slipper, is still a common act of violence in the East) (4). He bore the insult with the same equable placidity :—“ If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ? ” The more formal arraignment began (5) : and, however hurried and tumultuous the

First interrogatory

Second more public interrogatory

(1) John, xviii. 12—14.

(2) Ibid. 15—19.

(3) Matt. xxvi 57. Mark, xiv 55—64 ; Luke, xxi. 54

(4) John, xviii. 20—24.

(5) Matt. xxvi 59—66. ; Mark, xiv. 55—64.

Luke, xxi. 66—71 ; John, xiii. 19—24

meeting, the Sanhedrin, either desirous that their proceedings should be conducted with regularity, or, more likely, strictly fettered by the established rules of their court, perhaps by no means unanimous in their sentiments, were, after all, in the utmost embarrassment how to obtain a legal capital conviction. Witnesses were summoned, but the immutable principles of the Law, and the invariable practice of the tribunal, required, on every case of life and death, the agreement of two witnesses on some specific charge. Many were at hand, suborned by the enemies of Jesus and hesitating at no falsehood; but their testimony was so confused, or bore so little on any capital charge, that the court was still further perplexed. At length two witnesses deposed to the misapprehended speech of Jesus, at his first visit to Jerusalem, relating to the destruction of the Temple. But even their depositions were so contradictory, that it was scarcely possible to venture on a conviction upon such loose and incoherent statements. Jesus, in the meantime, preserved a tranquil and total silence. He neither interrupted nor questioned the witnesses, he did not condescend to place himself upon his defence. Nothing, therefore, remained (1) but to question the prisoner, and, if possible, to betray him into criminating himself. The High Priest, rising to give greater energy to his address, and adjuring him in the most solemn manner, in the name of God, to answer the truth, demands whether he is indeed the Messiah, the Christ, the son of the Living God. Jesus at once answers in the affirmative, and adds a distinct allusion to the prediction of Daniel (2), then universally admitted to refer to the reign of the Messiah. His words may be thus paraphrased: — “Ye shall know me for that mighty King described by the prophet; ye shall know me when my great, eternal, and imperishable kingdom shall be established on the ruins of your Theocracy.”

JESUS acknowledges himself the Messiah.

Conduct of the High Priest.

The secret joy of the High Priest, though perhaps his devout horror was not altogether insincere, was disguised by the tone and gesture of religious indignation which he assumed. He rent his clothes; an act considered indecorous, almost indecent, in the High Priest, unless justified by an outrage against the established religion so flagrant and offensive as this declaration of Jesus (3). He pronounced his speech (strangely indeed did its lofty tone contrast with the appearance of the prisoner) to be direct and treasonable blasphemy. The whole court, either sharing in the indignation, or

(1) Some have supposed that there were two examinations in different places before the Sanhedrin, one more private in the house of Caiaphas, another more public, in the Gazieth, the chamber in the temple where the Sanhedrin usually sat. But the account of St. John, the most particular of the whole, says expressly (xviii. 28.), that he was carried directly from the house of Caiaphas to the Pretorium of Pilate.

(2) The allusion to this prophecy (Dan. vii. 13, 14) is manifest.

(3) They who judge a blasphemer, first bid the witness to speak out plainly what he hath heard; and when he speaks it, the judges, standing on their feet, rend their garments, and do not sew them up again. Sanhed. i. 7. 10., and Babyl. Genar., in loc.

The High Priest was forbidden to rend his garments in the case of private mourning for the dead. Lev. x. 6., xxi. 10. In the time of public calamity he did. 1 Mac. xi. 71. Joseph B. J. ii. 26. 27.

hurried away by the vehement gesture and commanding influence, of the High Priest, hastily passed the fatal sentence, and declared Jesus guilty of the capital crime.

The insolent soldiery (as he was withdrawn from the court) had now full licence, and perhaps more than the licence, of their superiors to indulge the brutality of their own dispositions. They began to spit on his face—in the East the most degrading insult; they blind-folded him, and struck him with the palms of their hands, and, in their miserable merriment, commanded him to display his prophetic knowledge, by detecting the hand that was raised against him (1).

Jesus insulted by the soldiery.

The dismay, the despair, which had seized upon his adherents, is most strongly exemplified by the denial of Peter. The zealous disciple, after he had obtained admittance into the hall, stood warming himself, in the cool of the dawning morning, probably by a kind of brazier (2). He was first accosted by a female servant, who charged him with being an accomplice of the prisoner: Peter denied the charge with vehemence, and retired to the portico or porch in front of the palace. A second time, another female renewed the accusation: with still more angry protestations Peter disclaimed all connection with his master; and once, but unregarded, the cock crew. An hour afterwards, probably about this time, after the formal condemnation, the charge was renewed by a relation of the man whose ear he had cut off. His harsh Galilean pronunciation had betrayed him as coming from that province; but Peter now resolutely confirmed his denial with an oath. It was the usual time of the second cock-crowing, and again it was distinctly heard. Jesus, who was probably at that time in the outer hall or porch in the midst of the insulting soldiery, turned his face towards Peter, who, overwhelmed with shame and distress, hastily retreated from the sight of his deserted master, and wept the bitter tears of self-reproach and humiliation.

Denial of Peter.

But, although the Sanhedrin had thus passed their sentence, there remained a serious obstacle before it could be carried into execution. On the contested point, whether the Jews, under the Roman government, possessed the power of life and death (3), it is not easy to state the question with brevity and distinctness. Notwithstanding the apparently clear and distinct recognition of the Sanhedrin, that they had not authority to put any man to death (4); notwithstanding the remarkable concurrence of Rabbinical tradition with this declaration, which asserts that the nation had been

Question of the right of the Sanhedrin to inflict capital punishment.

(1) Matt. xxvi. 67, 68.; Mark, xiv. 65.; Luke, xxii. 63, 65.

(2) Matt. xxvi. 58, 69, 75.; Mark, xiv. 54, 66, 72.; Luke, xxii. 54—62.; John, xviii. 15, 16.

(3) The question is discussed in all the commentators. See Lardner, *Credid.*, i. 2.; Bas-

nage, *B. v. c. 2.*; Biscoe on the Acts, c. 6., note to Law's Theory, 147.; but above all Krebs, *Observat.* in *Nov. Test.*, 64—155.; Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, in loc.

(4) John, xviii. 31.

deprived of the power of life and death forty years before the destruction of the city (1), many of the most learned writers, some indeed of the ablest of the fathers (2), from arguments arising out of the practice of Roman provincial jurisprudence, and from later facts in the Evangelic history and that of the Jews, have supposed, that even if, as is doubtful, they were deprived of this power in civil, they retained it in religious, cases. Some have added, that even in the latter, the ratification of the sentence by the Roman governor, or the permission to carry it into execution, was necessary. According to this view, the object of the Sanhedrin was to bring the case before Pilate as a civil charge; since the assumption of a royal title and authority implied a design to cast off the Roman yoke. Or, if they retained the right of capital punishment in religious cases, it was contrary to usage, in the proceedings of the Sanhedrin, as sacred as law itself, to order an execution on the day of preparation for the Passover (3). As then they dared not violate that usage, and as delay was in every way dangerous, either from the sickleness of the people, who having been momentarily wrought up to a pitch of deadly animosity against Jesus, might again, by some act of power or goodness on his part, be carried away back to his side; or, in case of tumult, from the unsolicited intervention of the Romans; their plainest course was to obtain, if possible, the immediate support and assistance of the government.

Real relation of the Sanhedrin to the government.

In my own opinion, formed upon the study of the cotemporary Jewish history, the power of the Sanhedrin, at this period of political change and confusion, on this, as well as on other points, was altogether undefined. Under the Asmonean princes, the sovereign, uniting the civil and religious supremacy, the High-Priesthood with the royal power, exercised, with the Sanhedrin as his council, the highest political and civil jurisdiction. Herod, whose authority depended on the protection of Rome, and was maintained by his wealth, and in part by foreign mercenaries, although he might leave to the Sanhedrin, as the supreme tribunal, the judicial power, and in ordinary religious cases might admit their unlimited jurisdiction; yet no doubt watched and controlled their proceedings with the jealousy of an Asiatic despot, and practically, if not formally, subjected all their decrees to his revision: at least he would not have permitted any encroachment on his own supreme authority. In fact, according to the general tradition of the Jews, he at

(1) *Traditio est quadraginta annos ante excidium templi, ablatum fuisse jus vite et mortis. Hieros. Sanhedr., fol. 18. 1. Ib. fol. 242. Quadraginta annis ante vastatum templum, ablata sunt iudicia capitalia ab Israele.* There is, however, some doubt about the reading and translation of this passage. Wagenet reads four for forty *schlen* (De Syn.) insinuating that the judgments were not taken away, but interrupted and disused.

(2) Among the , Chrysostom and Au-

gustine; among the moderns, Lightfoot, Lardner, Krebs, Rosemüller, Kuinoel. The best discussion on that side of the question appears to me that of Krebs; on the other, that of Basnage.

(3) Cyril and Augustine, with whom Kuinoel is inclined to agree, interpret the words of St John, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," by subjoining, "on the day of the Passover."

one time put the whole Sanhedrin to death : and since, as his life advanced, his tyranny became more watchful and suspicious, he was more likely to diminish than increase the powers of the national tribunal. In the short interval of little more than thirty years, which had elapsed since the death of Herod, nearly ten had been occupied by the reign of Archelaus. On his deposal, the Sanhedrin had probably extended or resumed its original functions, but still the supreme civil authority rested in the Roman Procurator. All the commotions excited by the turbulent adventurers who infested the country, or by Judas the Galilean and his adherents, would fall under the cognisance of the civil governor, and were repressed by his direct interference. Nor can capital religious offences have been of frequent occurrence, since it is evident that the rigour of the Mosaic Law had been greatly relaxed, partly by the feebleness of the judicial power, partly by the tendency of the age, which ran in a counter direction to those acts of idolatry against which the Mosaic statutes were chiefly framed, and left few crimes obnoxious to the extreme penalty. Nor, until the existence of their polity and religion was threatened, first by the progress of Christ, and afterwards of his religion, would they have cared to be armed with an authority, which it was rarely, if ever, necessary or expedient to put forth in its full force (1).

This, then, may have been, strictly speaking, a new case, the first which had occurred since the reduction of Judæa to a Roman province. The Sanhedrin, from whom all jurisdiction in political cases was withdrawn; and who had no recent precedent for the infliction of capital punishment on any religious charge, might think it more prudent (particularly during this hurried and tumultuous proceeding, which commenced at midnight, and must be dispatched with the least possible delay) at once to disclaim an authority which, however the Roman governor seemed to attribute to them, he might at last prevent their carrying into execution. All the other motives then operating on their minds would concur in favour of this course of proceeding :—their mistrust of the people, who might attempt a rescue from their feeble and unrespected officers, and could only, if they should fall off to the other side, be controlled by the dread of the Roman military; and the reluctance to profane so sacred a day by a public execution, of which the odium would thus be cast

That of Jesus a new and unprecedented case.

Motives of the rule, in disclaiming their power.

(1) It may be worth observing, that not merely were the pharisaic and sadduceic party at issue on the great question of the expediency of the severe administration of the law, which implied frequency of capital punishment; the latter party being notoriously sanguinary in the execution of public justice; but even in the pharisaic party one school, that of Hillel, was accused (Jost Geschichte der Israeliten), by the rival school of Shammai, of dangerous lenity in the adminis-

tration of the law, and of culpable unwillingness to inflict the punishment of death.

The authority of them, says Lightfoot (from the Rabbins), was not taken away by the Romans, but rather relinquished by themselves. The slothfulness of the council destroyed its own authority. Hear it justly upbraided in this matter :— The council which puts one to death in seven years is called "destructive." R. Lazar Ben Azariah said; which puts one to death in seventy years. Lightfoot, in loc.

on their foreign rulers. It was clearly their policy, at any cost, to secure the intervention of Pilate, as well to insure the destruction of their victim, as to shift the responsibility from their own head upon that of the Romans. They might, not unreasonably, suppose that Pilate, whose relentless disposition had been shown in a recent instance, would not hesitate, at once, and on their authority, on the first intimation of a dangerous and growing party, to act without further examination or inquiry, and without scruple, add one victim more to the robbers or turbulent insurgents who, it appears, were kept in prison, in order to be executed as a terrible example at that period of national concourse.

Jesus before Pilate.

Remorse and death of Judas.

It should seem that while Jesus was sent in chains to the Prætorium of Pilate, whether in the Antonia, the fortress adjacent to the Temple, or in part of Herod's palace, which was connected with the mountain of the Temple by a bridge over the Tyropæon, the council adjourned to their usual place of assemblage, the chamber called Gazith, within the Temple. A deputation only accompanied the prisoner to explain and support the charge, and here probably it was that, in his agony of remorse, Judas brought back the reward that he had received (1); and when the assembly, to his confession of his crime, in betraying the innocent blood, replied with cold and contumelious unconcern, he cast down the money on the pavement, and rushed away to close his miserable life. Nor must the characteristic incident be omitted, the Sanhedrin, who had not hesitated to reward the basest treachery, probably out of the Temple funds, scruple to receive back and replace in the sacred Treasury, the price of blood. The sum, therefore, is set apart for the purchase of a field for the burial of strangers, long known by the name of Aceldama, the field of blood (2). Such is ever the absurdity, as well as the heinousness, of crimes committed in the name of religion.

Astonishment of Pilate.

The first emotion of Pilate at this strange accusation from the great tribunal of the nation, however rumours of the name and influence of Jesus had, no doubt, reached his ears, must have been the utmost astonishment. To the Roman mind the Jewish character was ever an inexplicable problem. But if so when they were seen scattered about and mingled with the countless diversities of races of discordant habits, usages, and religions, which thronged to the metropolis of the world, or were dispersed through the principal cities of the empire; in their own country, where there was, as it were, a concentration of all their extraordinary national propensities, they must have appeared in still stronger opposition to the

(1) Matt. xxvii. 3—10.

(2) The sum appears extremely small for the purchase of a field, even should we adopt the very probable suggestion of Kuinoël, that it was a field in which the fuller's earth had been

worked out, and which was therefore entirely barren and unproductive. Kuinoël, in loc. Matt. xxvii. 2—14.; Mark, xiv. 1—5.; Luke, xxiii. 1—6. John, xviii. 28—38.

rest of mankind. To the loose manner in which religious belief hung on the greater part of the subjects of the Roman empire, their recluse and uncompromising attachment to the faith of their ancestors offered the most singular contrast. Every where else the temples were open, the rites free to the stranger by race or country, who rarely scrupled to do homage to the tutelary deity of the place. The Jewish Temple alone received, indeed, but with a kind of jealous condescension, the offerings even of the Emperor. Throughout the rest of the world, religious enthusiasm might not be uncommon, here and there, in individual cases, particularly in the East: the priests of some of the mystic religions at times excited a considerable body of followers, and drove them blindfold to the wildest acts of superstitious frenzy; but the sudden access of religious fervour was, in general, as transient as violent; the flame burned with rapid and irresistible fury, and went out of itself. The Jews stood alone (according to the language and opinion of the Roman world), as a nation of religious fanatics; and this fanaticism was a deep, a settled, a conscientious feeling, and formed, an essential and inseparable part, the groundwork of their rigid and unsocial character.

Yet even to one familiarised by a residence of several years with the Jewish nation, on the present occasion, the conduct of the Sanhedrin must have appeared utterly unaccountable. This senate, or municipal body, had left to the Roman governor to discover the danger, and suppress the turbulence, of the robbers and insurgents against whom Pilate had taken such decisive measures. Now, however, they appear suddenly seized with an access of loyalty for the Roman authority, and a trembling apprehension of the least invasion of the Roman title to supremacy. And against whom were they actuated by this unwonted caution, and burning with this unprecedented zeal? Against a man who, as far as he could discover, was a harmless, peaceful, and benevolent enthusiast, who had persuaded many of the lower orders to believe in certain unintelligible doctrines, which seemed to have no relation to the government of the country, and were, as yet, no way connected with insurrectionary movements. In fact, he could not but clearly see that they were enemies of the influence obtained by Jesus over the populace; but whether Jesus or the Sanhedrin governed the religious feelings and practices of the people, was a matter of perfect indifference to the Roman supremacy.

The vehemence with which they pressed the charge, and the charge itself, were equally inexplicable. When Pilate referred back, as it were, the judgment to themselves, and offered to leave Jesus to be punished by the existing law; while they shrunk from that responsibility, and disclaimed, at least over such a case and at such a season, the power of life and death, they did not in the least relax

at the conduct of the Sanhedrin.

at the nature of the charge.

the vehement earnestness of their persecution. Jesus was accused of assuming the title of King of the Jews, and with an intention of throwing off the Roman yoke. But, however little Pilate may have heard or understood his doctrines, the conduct and demeanour of Christ were so utterly at variance with such a charge; the only intelligible article in the accusation, his imputed prohibition of the payment of tribute, so unsupported by proof, as to bear no weight. This redoubted king had been seized by the emissaries of the Sanhedrin, perhaps Roman soldiers placed under their orders; had been conveyed without resistance through the city; his few adherents, mostly unarmed peasants, had fled at the instant of his capture; not the slightest tumultuary movement had taken place during his examination before the High Priest, and the popular feeling seemed rather at present incensed against him than inclined to take his part.

The deputation refuse to communicate with Pilate from fear of legal defilement.

To the mind of Pilate, indeed, accustomed to the disconnection of religion and morality, the more striking contradiction in the conduct of the Jewish rulers may not have appeared altogether so extraordinary. At the moment when they were violating the great eternal and immutable principles of all religion, and infringing on one of the positive commandments of their law, by persecuting to death an innocent man, they were witholden by religious scruple from entering the dwelling of Pilate; they were endangering the success of their cause, lest this intercourse with the unclean stranger should exclude them from the worship of their God — a worship for which they contracted no disqualifying defilement by this deed of blood. The deputation stood *without* the hall of Pilate (1); and not even their animosity against Jesus could induce them to depart from that superstitious usage, to lend the weight of their personal appearance to the solemn accusation, or, at all events, to deprive the hated object of their persecution of any advantage which he might receive from undergoing his examination without being confronted with his accusers. Pilate seems to have paid so much respect to their usages, that he went out to receive their charge, and to inquire the nature of the crime for which Jesus was denounced.

Examination before Pilate.

The simple question put to Jesus, on his first interrogatory before Pilate, was whether he claimed the title of King of the Jews (2). The answer of Jesus may be considered as an appeal to the justice and right feeling of the governor. "As Roman prefect, have you any cause for suspecting me of ambitious or insurrectionary designs; do you entertain the least apprehension of my seditious demeanour; or are you not rather adopting the suggestions of my enemies, and lending yourself to their unwarranted animosity?" Pilate disclaims all communion with the passions or the prejudices of the Jewish

(1) John, xviii, 28.

(2) John, xviii 33—37.

rulers; but Jesus had been brought before him, denounced as a dangerous disturber of the public peace, and he was officially bound to take cognisance of such a charge. In the rest of the defence of Christ, the only part intelligible to Pilate would be the unanswerable appeal to the peaceful conduct of his followers. When Jesus asserted that he was a king, yet evidently implied a moral or religious sense in his use of the term, Pilate might attribute a vague meaning to his language, from the Stoic axiom, I am a king when I rule myself (1); and thus give a sense to that which otherwise would have sounded in his ears like unintelligible mysticism. His perplexity, however, must have been greatly increased when Jesus, in this perilous hour, when his life trembled, at it were, on the balance, declared that the object of his birth and of his life was the establishment of "the truth." "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." That the peace of a nation or the life of an individual should be endangered on account of the truth or falsehood of any system of speculative opinions, was so diametrically opposite to the general opinion and feeling of the Roman world, that Pilate, either in contemptuous mockery, or with the merciful design of showing the utter harmlessness and insignificance of such points, inquired what he meant by truth, — what truth had to do with the present question, with a question of life and death, with a capital charge brought by the national council before the supreme tribunal. Apparently despairing, on one side, of bringing him, whom he seems to have considered a blameless enthusiast, to his senses; on the other, unwilling to attach so much importance to what appeared to him in so different a light, he wished at once to put an end to the whole affair. He abruptly left Jesus, and went out again to the Jewish deputation at the gate, (now perhaps increased by a greater number of the Sanhedrin,) and declared his conviction of the innocence of Jesus.

Pilate endeavours to save Jesus.

At this unexpected turn, the Sanhedrin burst into a furious clamour, reiterated their vague, perhaps contradictory, and to the ears of Pilate unintelligible or insignificant charges, and seemed determined to press the conviction with implacable animosity. Pilate turned to Jesus, who had been led out, to demand his answer to these charges. Jesus stood collected, but silent, and the astonishment of Pilate was still further heightened. The only accusation which seemed to bear any meaning, imputed to Jesus the raising tumultuous meetings of the people throughout the country, from Judæa to Galilee (2). This incidental mention of Galilee, made perhaps with an invidious design of awakening in the mind of the go-

clamours of the accusers.

(1) *Ad summum sapiens uno minor est Jove, dives Liber, honoratus, pulcher Rex denique regum*
Hor. Ep. ii. 1. 106. Comp. Sat. i. 3. 125.
At pueri ludentes, rex eris, inquit,
Si recte facies. Epist. i. 1. 59.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 5

vernor the remembrance of the turbulent character of that people, suggested to Pilate a course by which he might rid himself of the embarrassment and responsibility of this strange transaction. It has been conjectured, not without probability, that the massacre of Herod's subjects was the cause of the enmity that existed between the tetrarch and the Roman governor. Pilate had now an opportunity at once to avoid an occurrence of the same nature, in which he had no desire to be implicated, and to make overtures of reconciliation to the native sovereign. He was indifferent about the fate of Jesus, provided he could shake off all actual concern in his death; or he might suppose that Herod, uninfected with the inexplicable enmity of the chief priests, might be inclined to protect his innocent subject (1).

Jesus sent
back to Herod.

Jesus sent
back with
insult.

The fame of Jesus had already excited the curiosity of Herod, but his curiosity was rather that which sought amusement or excitement from the powers of an extraordinary wonder-worker, than that which looked for information or improvement from a wise moral, or a divinely-commissioned religious, teacher. The circumstances of the interview, which probably took place in the presence of the tetrarch and his courtiers, and into which none of the disciples of Jesus could find their way, are not related. The investigation was long; but Jesus maintained his usual unruffled silence, and at the close of the examination, he was sent back to Pilate. By the murder of John, Herod had incurred deep and lasting unpopularity; he might be unwilling to increase his character for cruelty by the same conduct towards Jesus, against whom, as he had not the same private reasons for requiring his support, he had not the same bitterness of personal animosity; nor was his sovereignty, as has before been observed, endangered in the same manner as that of the chief priests, by the progress of Jesus. Herod therefore might treat with derision what appeared to him an harmless assumption of royalty, and determine to effect, by contempt and contumely, that degradation of Jesus in the estimation of the people which his more cruel measures in the case of John had failed to accomplish. With his connivance, therefore, if not under his instructions, his soldiers (perhaps some of them,—as those of his father had been, foreigners, Gaulish or Thracian barbarians) were permitted or encouraged in every kind of cruel and wanton insult. They clothed him, in mockery of his royal title, in a purple robe, and so escorted him back to Pilate, who, if he occupied part of the Herodion, not the Antonia, was close at hand, only in a different quarter of the same extensive palace.

The refusal of Herod to take cognisance of the charge renewed the embarrassment of Pilate, but a way yet seemed open to extricate

himself from his difficulty. There was a custom, that in honour of the great festival, the Passover, a prisoner should be set at liberty at the request of the people (1). The multitude had already become clamorous for their annual privilege. Among the half-robbers, half-insurgents, who had so long infested the province of Judæa and the whole of Palestine, there was a celebrated bandit, named Barabbas, who, probably in some insurrectionary tumult, had been guilty of murder. Of the extent of his crime we are ignorant ; but Pilate, by selecting the worst case, that which the people could not but consider the most atrocious and offensive to the Roman government, might desire to force them, as it were, to demand the release of Jesus. Barabbas had been undeniably guilty of those overt acts of insubordination, which they endeavoured to infer as necessary consequences of the teaching of Jesus.

Barabbas.

He came forth, therefore, to the outside of his prætorium, and having declared that neither himself nor Herod could discover any real guilt in the prisoner who had been brought before them, he appealed to them to choose between the condemned insurgent and murderer, and the blameless prophet of Nazareth. The High Priests had now wrought the people to madness, and had most likely crowded the courts round Pilate's quarters with their most zealous and devoted partizans. The voice of the Governor was drowned with an instantaneous burst of acclamation, demanding the release of Barabbas. Pilate made yet another ineffectual attempt to save the life of the innocent man. He thought by some punishment, short of death, if not to awaken the compassion, to satisfy the animosity, of the people (2). The person of Jesus was given up to the lictors, and scourging with rods, the common Roman punishment for minor offences, was inflicted with merciless severity. The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, or, as is thought, of some prickly plant, as it is scarcely conceivable that life could have endured if the temples had been deeply pierced by a circle of thorns (3). In this pitiable state Jesus was again led forth, bleeding with the scourge, his brow throbbing with the pointed crown ; and drest in the purple robe of mockery to make the last vain appeal to the compassion, the humanity, of the people. The wild and furious cries of " crucify him, crucify him," broke out on all sides. In vain Pilate commanded them to be the executioners of their own sentence, and reasserted his conviction of the innocence of Jesus. In vain he accompanied his assertion by the significant action of washing his hands in the public view, as if to show that he would contract no guilt or defilement from the blood of a blameless man (4). He was

Jesus crowned with thorns and shown to the people.

(1) Matt. xxvii. 15—20.; Mark, xv. 6—11.; Luke, xxiii. 13—19.; John, xviii. 39.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 16.; John, xix. 1—5.

(3) It should seem, says Grotius, that the mockery was more intended than the pain. Some

suppose the plant, the naba or nabka of the Arabians—with many small and sharp spikes,—which would be painful, but not endanger life. Ras-
selquist's Travels.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 24. 25

The people demand his crucifixion.

answered by the awful imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." The deputies of the Sanhedrin pressed more earnestly the capital charge of blasphemy—"He had made himself the Son of God (1)." This inexplicable accusation still more shook the resolution of Pilate, who, perhaps at this instant, was further agitated by a message from his wife. Claudia Procula (the law which prohibited the wives of the provincial rulers from accompanying their husbands to the seat of their governments now having fallen into disuse) had been permitted to reside with her husband Pilate in Palestine (2). The stern justice of the Romans had guarded by this law against the baneful effects of female influence. In this instance, had Pilate listened to the humaner counsels of his wife, from what a load of guilt would he have delivered his own conscience and his province. Aware of the proceedings which had occupied Pilate during the whole night; perhaps in some way better acquainted with the character of Jesus, she had gone to rest; but her sleep, her morning slumbers, when visions were supposed to be more than ordinarily true, were disturbed by dreams of the innocence of Jesus, and the injustice and inhumanity to which her husband might lend his authority.

Intercession of Pilate's wife.

The prisoner was withdrawn into the guard-room, and Pilate endeavoured to obtain some explanation of the meaning of this new charge from Jesus himself. He made no answer, and Pilate appealed to his fears, reminding him that his life and death depended on the power of the Prefect. Jesus replied, that his life was only in the power of divine Providence, by whose permission alone Pilate enjoyed a temporary authority (3). But touched, it may seem, by the exertions of Pilate to save him, with all his accustomed gentleness he declares Pilate guiltless of his blood, in comparison with his betrayers and persecutors among his own countrymen. This speech still further moved Pilate in his favour. But the justice and the compassion of the Roman gave way at once before the fear of weakening his interest, or endangering his personal safety, with his imperial master. He made one effort more to work on the implacable people; he was answered with the same furious exclamations, and with menaces of more alarming import. They accused him of indifference to the stability of the imperial power:—"Thou art not Cæsar's friend (4):" they threatened to report his conduct, in thus allowing the title of royalty to be assumed with impunity, to the reigning Cæsar. That Cæsar was the dark and jealous Tiberius. Up to this period the Jewish nation, when they had complained of the tyranny of their native sovereigns, had ever obtained a favourable

Last interrogatory of Jesus.

(1) John, xix. 7.

(2) Matt. xxvii. 19—23. This law had fallen into neglect in the time of Augustus; during the reign of Tiberius it was openly infringed, and the motion of Cæcina in the Senate to put it more

strictly in force, produced no effect. Tac. Ann. iii. 33.

(3) John, xix. 8—11.

(4) John, xix. 12.

hearing at Rome. Even against Herod the Great, their charges had been received; they had been admitted to a public audience, and though their claim to national independence at the death of that sovereign had not been allowed, Archelaus had received his government with limited powers: and on the complaint of the people, had been removed from his throne. In short, the influence of that attachment to the Cæsarean family (1), which had obtained for the nation distinguished privileges both from Julius and Augustus, had not yet been effaced by that character of turbulence and insubordination which led to their final ruin.

In what manner such a charge of not being “Caesar’s friend” might be misrepresented or aggravated, it was impossible to conjecture, but the very strangeness of the accusation was likely to work on the gloomy and suspicious mind of Tiberius; and the frail tenure by which Pilate held his favour at Rome is shown by his ignominious recall and banishment some years after, *on the complaint of the Jewish people*; though not, it is true, for an act of indiscreet mercy, but one of unnecessary cruelty. The latent and suspended decision of his character reappeared in all its customary recklessness. The life of one man, however blameless, was not for an instant to be considered, when his own advancement, his personal safety, were in peril: his sterner nature resumed the ascendant; he mounted the tribunal, which was erected on a tessellated pavement near the prætorium (2), and passed the solemn, the irrevocable sentence. It might almost seem, that in bitter mockery, Pilate for the last time demanded, “Shall I crucify your king?” “We have no king, but Caesar,” was the answer of the chief priests. Pilate yielded up the contest; the murderer was commanded to be set at liberty, the just man surrendered to crucifixion.

Condemnation of Jesus.

The remorseless soldiery were at hand, and instigated, no doubt, by the influence, by the bribes, of the Sanhedrin, carried the sentence into effect with the most savage and wanton insults. They dressed him up in all the mock semblance of royalty (he had already the purple robe and the crown); a reed was now placed in his hand for a sceptre; they paid him their insulting homage; struck him with the palms of their hands; spit upon him; and then stripping him of his splendid attire, dressed him again in his own simple raiment, and led him out to death (3).

Insults of Jesus by the populace and soldiery.

The place of execution was without the gates. This was the case

(1) Compare Hist. of the Jews, ii. 86.

(2) We should not notice the strange mistake of the learned German, Hug, on this subject, if it had not been adopted by a clever writer in a popular journal. Hug has supposed the λιθόστρωτον (perhaps the tessellated) stone pavement on which Pilate’s tribunal was erected, to be the same which was the scene of a remarkable incident mentioned by Josephus. During the siege of the Temple, a centurion, Julianus,

charged on horseback, and forced his way into the inner court of the Temple, his horse stepped up on the pavement (λιθόστρωτον), and he fell. It is scarcely credible that any writer acquainted with Jewish antiquities, or the structure of the Temple, could suppose that the Roman governor would raise his tribunal within the inviolable precincts of the inner court.

(3) Matt. xxvii. 27–30.; Mark, xv. 15–20.

in most towns; and in Jerusalem, which, according to tradition, always maintained a kind of resemblance to the camp in the wilderness (1), as criminal punishments were forbidden to defile the sacred precincts, a field beyond the walls was set apart and desecrated for this unhallowed purpose (2).

Hitherto we have been tempted into some detail, both by the desire of ascertaining the state of the public mind, and the motives of the different actors in this unparalleled transaction, and by the necessity of harmonising the various circumstances related in the four separate narratives. As we approach the appalling close, we tremble lest the colder process of explanation should deaden the solemn and harrowing impression of the scene, or weaken the contrast between the wild and tumultuous uproar of the triumphant enemies and executioners of the Son of Man, with the deep and unutterable misery of the few faithful adherents who still followed his footsteps: and, far above all, his own serene, his more than human, composure, the dignity of suffering, which casts so far into the shade every example of human heroism. Yet in the most trifling incidents there is so much life and reality, so remarkable an adherence to the usages of the time, and to the state of public feeling, that we cannot but point out the most striking of these particulars. For, in fact, there is no single circumstance, however minute, which does not add to the truth of the whole description, so as to stamp it (we have honestly endeavoured to consider it with the calmest impartiality) with an impression of credibility, of certainty, equal to, if not surpassing, every event in the history of man. The inability of Jesus (exhausted by a sleepless night, by the length of the trial, by insults and bodily pain, by the scourging and the blows) to bear his own cross (the constant practice of condemned criminals) (3); the seizure of a Cyrenian, from a province more numerous colonised by Jews than any other, except Egypt and Babylonia, as he was entering the city, and, perhaps, was known to be an adherent of Jesus, to bear his cross (4); the customary deadening potion of wine and myrrh (5), which was given to malefactors previous to their execution, but which Jesus, aware of its stupifying or intoxicating effect, and determined to preserve his firmness and self-command, but slightly touched with his lips; the title, the King (6) of the Jews, in three

Circum-
stances of
the cruci-
fixion.

(1) Numbers, xv. 35.; 1 Kings, xxi. 13.; Hebrews, xiii. 12. Extra urbem, patibulum. Plautus. See Grotius.

(2) It is curious to trace on what uncertain grounds rest many of our established notions relating to incidents in the early history of our religion. No one scruples to speak in the popular language of "the Hill of Calvary;" yet there appears no evidence, which is not purely legendary, for the assertion that Calvary was on a hill. The notion arose from the fanciful interpretation of the word Golgotha, the place of a skull, which was thought to imply some resem-

blance in its form to a human skull; but it is far more probably derived from having been strewn with the remains of condemned malefactors.

(3) Hence the common term "furcifer." Patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affligatur cruci. Plauti frag.

(4) Mark, xv. 21; Luke, xxiii. 26.

(5) Matt. xxvii. 34.; Mark, xv. 23. The Rabbins say, wine with frankincense. This potion was given by the Jews out of compassion to criminals.

(6) Luke, xxiii. 38; John, xix. 19, 20.

languages (1), so strictly in accordance with the public usage of the time; the division and casting lots for his garments by the soldiers who executed him (those who suffered the ignominious punishment of the cross being exposed entirely naked, or with nothing more than was necessary for decency) (2); all these particulars, as well as the instrument of execution, the cross, are in strict unison with the well-known practice of Roman criminal jurisprudence. The execution of the two malefactors, one on each side of Jesus, is equally consonant with their ordinary administration of justice, particularly in this ill-fated province. Probably before, unquestionably at a later period, Jerusalem was doomed to behold the long line of crosses on which her sons were left by the relentless Roman authorities to struggle with slow and agonising death.

In other circumstances, the Jewish national character is equally conspicuous. This appears even in the conduct of the malefactors. The fanatical Judaism of one, not improbably a follower, or infected with the doctrines of the Gaulonite, even in his last agony, has strength enough to insult the pretender to the name of a Messiah who yet has not the power to release himself and his fellow-sufferers from death. The other, of milder disposition, yet in death, inclines to believe in Jesus, and when he returns to assume his kingdom, would hope to share in its blessings. To him Jesus, speaking in the current language promises an immediate reward; he is to pass at once from life to happiness (3). Besides this, how striking the triumph of his enemies, as he seemed to surrender himself without resistance to the growing pangs of death; the assemblage, not only of the rude and ferocious populace, but of many of the most distinguished rank, the members of the Sanhedrin, to behold and to insult the last moments of their once re-doubted, but now despised, adversary. And still every indication of approaching death seemed more and more to justify their rejection! still no sign of the mighty, the all-powerful Messiah! Their taunting allusions to his royal title, to his misapprehended speech, which rankled in their hearts, about the demolition and rebuilding of the Temple (4); to his power of healing others, and restoring life, a power in his own case so manifestly suspended or lost; the offer to acknowledge him as the Messiah, if he would come down from the cross in the face of day; the still more malignant reproach, that he, who had boasted of the peculiar favour of God, was now so visibly deserted and abandoned,—the son of God, as he called himself, is left to perish despised and disregarded

The two
malefac-
tors.

Spectators
of the
execution.

(1) The inscriptions on the palisades which divided the part of the temple court which might be entered by the Gentiles from that which was open only to the Jews, were written, with the Roman sanction, in the three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

(2) Matt. xxvii. 35.; Mark, xv. 24.; Luke, xxiii. 34.; John, xix. 23, 24.

(3) Luke, xxiii. 39—43.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 39—43.; Mark, xv. 31, 32. Luke, xxiii. 35.

by God; all this as strikingly accords with, and illustrates the state of, Jewish feeling, as the former circumstances of the Roman usages.

Conduct
of Jesus.

And amid the whole wild and tumultuous scene there are some quiet gleams of pure Christianity, which contrast with and relieve the general darkness and horror: not merely the superhuman patience, with which insult, and pain, and ignominy, are borne; not merely the serene self-command, which shows that the senses are not benumbed or deadened by the intensity of suffering; but the slight incidental touches of gentleness and humanity (1). We cannot but indicate the answer to the afflicted women, who stood by the way weeping, as he passed on to Calvary, and whom he commanded not "to weep for him," but for the deeper sorrows to which themselves or their children were devoted; the notice of the group of his own kindred and followers who stood by the cross; his bequest of the support of his Virgin Mother to the beloved disciple (2); above all, that most affecting exemplification of his own tenets, the prayer for the pardon of his enemies, the palliation of their crime from their ignorance of its real enormity,—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (3)." Yet so little are the Evangelists studious of effect, that this incident of unrivalled moral sublimity, even in the whole life of Christ, is but briefly, we might almost say carelessly, noticed by St. Luke alone.

Preternatural
darkness.

From the sixth hour (noonday), writes the Evangelists St. Matthew, there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour (4). The whole earth (the phrase in the other Evangelists) is no doubt used according to Jewish phraseology, in which Palestine, the sacred land, was emphatically the earth. This supernatural gloom appears to resemble that terrific darkness which precedes an earthquake.

For these three hours Jesus had borne the excruciating anguish—his human nature begins to fail, and he complains of the burning thirst, the most painful but usual aggravation of such a death. A compassionate bystander filled a sponge with vinegar, fixed it on a long reed, and was about to lift it to his lips, when the dying Jesus uttered his last words, those of the twenty-second Psalm, in which, in the bitterness of his heart, David had complained of the manifest desertion of his God, who had yielded him up to his enemies—the phrase had perhaps been in common use in extreme distress—Eli, Eli, lama Sabacthani?—My God, my God, why hast

(1) Luke, xxiii. 27—31.

(2) John, xix. 25—27.

(3) Luke, xxiii. 34.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 45—53.; Mark, xv. 33—38.; Luke, xxiii. 44, 45.; John, xix. 28—30.

Gibbon has said, and truly, as regards all well-informed and sober interpreters of the

sacred writings, that "the celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned." It still maintains its ground, however, with writers of a certain class, notwithstanding its irrelevancy has already been admitted by Origen, and its authority rejected by every writer who has the least pretensions to historical criticism.

thou forsaken me (1)? The compassionate hand of the man, raising the vinegar, was arrested by others, who, a few perhaps in trembling curiosity, but more in bitter mockery, supposing that he called not on God (Eli) but on Elias, commanded him to wait and see, whether, even now, that great and certain sign of the Messiah, the appearance of Elijah, would at length take place.

Their barbarous triumph was uninterrupted; and he, who yet (his followers were not without some lingering hope, and the more superstitious of his enemies not without some trembling apprehension) might awaken to all his terrible and prevailing majesty, had now manifestly expired (2). The Messiah, the imperishable, the eternal Messiah, had quietly yielded up the ghost.

Death of
Jesus.

Even the dreadful earthquake which followed, seemed to pass away without appalling the enemies of Jesus. The rending of the veil of the Temple from the top to the bottom, so strikingly significant of the approaching abolition of the local worship, would either be concealed by the priesthood, or attributed as a natural effect to the convulsion of the earth. The same convulsion would displace the stones which covered the ancient tombs, and lay open many of the innumerable rock-hewn sepulchres which perforated the hills on every side of the city, and expose the dead to public view. To the awe-struck and depressed minds of the followers of Jesus, no doubt, were confined those visionary appearances of the spirits of their deceased brethren, which are obscurely intimated in the rapid narratives of the Evangelists (3).

But these terrific appearances, which seem to have been lost on the infatuated Jews, were not without effect on the less prejudiced Roman soldiery; they appeared to bear the testimony of Heaven to the innocence, to the divine commission, of the crucified Jesus. The centurion who guarded the spot according to St. Luke, declared aloud his conviction that Jesus was a just man; according to St. Matthew, that he was the Son of God (4).

Secure now, by the visible marks of dissolution, by the piercing of his side, from which blood and water flowed out, that Jesus was actually dead; and still, even in their most irreligious acts of cruelty and wickedness, punctiliously religious (since it was a sin to leave the body of that blameless being on the cross during one day (5),

Burial of
Jesus.

(1) Matt. xxvii. 46.; Mark, xv 34—37.; John, xix. 28—30.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 46.

(3) This is the probable and consistent view of Michaelis. Those who assert a supernatural eclipse of the sun rest on the most dubious and suspicious tradition; while those who look with jealousy on the introduction of natural causes, however so timed as in fact to be no less extraordinary than events altogether contrary to the course of nature, forget or despise the difficulty of accounting for the apparently slight sensation produced on the minds of the Jews, and the total

silence of all other history. Compare the very sensible Note of M. Guizot on the latter part of Gibbon's xvth chapter.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 54.; Luke, xxiii. 47. Lightfoot supposes that by intercourse with the Jews he may have learned their phraseology: Grotius, that he had a general impression that Jesus was a superior being.

(5) Deut. xxi. 23. The Jews usually buried executed criminals ignominiously, but at the request of a family would permit a regular burial. Lightfoot, from Babyl. : an.

whom it had been no sin, but rather an act of the highest virtue to murder (the day before), the Sanhedrin gave their consent to a wealthy adherent of Jesus, Joseph, of the town of Arimathea, to bury the body. The sanction of Pilate was easily obtained : it was taken down from the cross, and consigned to the sepulchre prepared by Joseph for his own family, but in which no body had yet been laid (1). The sepulchre was at no great distance from the place of execution : the customary rites were performed ; the body was wrapped in fine linen and anointed with a mixture of costly spice and myrrh, with which the remains of those who were held in respect by their kindred were usually preserved. As the Sabbath was drawing on, the work was performed with the utmost despatch, and Jesus was laid to rest in the grave of his faithful adherent.

The religion apparently a
an end.

In that rock-hewn tomb might appear to be buried for ever both the fears of his enemies and the hopes of his followers. Though some rumours of his predictions concerning his resurrection had crept abroad, sufficient to awaken the caution of the Sanhedrin, and to cause them to seal the outward covering of the sepulchre, and, with the approbation of Pilate, to station a Roman guard upon the spot; yet, as far as the popular notion of the Messiah, nothing could be more entirely and absolutely destructive of their hopes than the patient submission of Jesus to insult, to degradation, to death. However, with some of milder nature, his exquisite sufferings might excite compassion ; however the savage and implacable cruelty with which the rulers urged his fate might appear revolting to the multitude, after their first access of religious indignation had passed away, and the recollection returned to the gentle demeanour and beneficent acts of Jesus ; yet the hope of redemption, whatever meaning they might attach to the term, whether deliverance from their enemies or the restoration of their theocratic government, had set in utter darkness. However vague or contradictory this notion among the different sects or classes, with the mass of the people, nothing less than an immediate instantaneous re-appearance in some appalling or imposing form could have reinstated Jesus in his high place in the popular expectation. Without this, his career was finally closed, and he would pass away at once, as one of the brief wonders of the time, his temporary claims to respect or attachment refuted altogether by the shame, by the ignominy, of his death. His ostensible leading adherents were men of the humblest origin, and, as yet, of no distinguished ability ; men from whom little danger could be apprehended, and who might safely be treated with contemptuous neglect. No attempt appears to have been made to secure a single person, or to prevent their peaceful retreat to their native Galilee. The whole religion centered in the

(1) Matt. xxvii. 57-60. Mark, xv. 42-47. Luke, xxiii. 50-56. John, xix. 38-42.

person of Jesus, and in his death was apparently suppressed, crushed, extinguished for ever. After a few days, the Sanhedrin would dread nothing less than a new disturbance from the same quarter ; and Pilate, as the whole affair had passed off without tumult, would soon suppress the remonstrances of his conscience at the sacrifice of an innocent life, since the public peace had been maintained, and no doubt his own popularity with the leading Jews considerably heightened, at so cheap a price. All then was at an end : yet, after the death of Christ, commences, strictly speaking, the history of Christianity.

The caprice, the jealousy, or the prudence, of the Roman government, we have before observed, had in no point so frequently violated the feelings of the subject nation, as in the deposition of the High Priest, and the appointment of a successor to the office, in whom they might hope to place more implicit confidence. The stubbornness of the people, revolted by this wanton insult, persisted in honouring with the title those whom they could not maintain in the post of authority ; all who had borne the office retained, in common language, the appellation of High Priest, if indeed the appellation was not still more loosely applied. Probably the most influential man in Jerusalem at this time was Annas, or Ananus, four of whose sons in turn either had been, or were subsequently, elevated to that high dignity, now filled by his son-in-law, Caiaphas.

The High Priest.

The house of Annas was the first place (1) to which Jesus was led, either that the guard might receive further instructions, or perhaps as the place of the greatest security, while the Sanhedrin was hastily summoned to meet at that untimely hour, towards midnight or soon after in the house of Caiaphas. Before the houses of the more wealthy in the East, or rather within the outer porch, there is usually a large square open court, in which public business is transacted, particularly by those who fill official stations. Into such a court, before the palace of Caiaphas, Jesus was led by the soldiers, and Peter following unnoticed amid the throng, lingered before the porch until John, who happened to be familiarly known to some of the High Priest's servants, obtained permission for his entrance (2).

House of Annas

The first process seems to have been a private examination (3), perhaps while the rest of the Sanhedrin were assembling, before the High Priest. He demanded of Jesus the nature of his doctrines, and the character of his disciples. Jesus appealed to the publicity of his teaching, and referred him to his hearers for an account of the tenets which he had advanced. He had no secret doctrines, either of tumult or sedition ; he had ever spoken “ in public, in the synagogue, or in the Temple.” And now the fearful scene of personal insult and violence began. An officer of the High Priest, enraged at the calm composure with which Jesus answered the interrogatory, struck him on the mouth (beating him on the mouth, sometimes with the hand, more often with a thong of leather or a slipper, is still a common act of violence in the East) (4). He bore the insult with the same equable placidity :—“ If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil ; but if well, why smitest thou me ?” The more formal arraignment began (5) : and, however hurried and tumultuous the

First interrogatory

Second more public interrogatory

(1) John, xviii. 12—14.

(2) Ibid. 15—19.

(3) Matt. xxvi 57. Mark, xiv 55—64 ; Luke, xxi. 54

(4) John, xviii. 20—24.

(5) Matt. xxvi 59—66. ; Mark, xiv. 55—64.

Luke, xxi. 66—71 ; John, xiii. 19—24

meeting, the Sanhedrin, either desirous that their proceedings should be conducted with regularity, or, more likely, strictly fettered by the established rules of their court, perhaps by no means unanimous in their sentiments, were, after all, in the utmost embarrassment how to obtain a legal capital conviction. Witnesses were summoned, but the immutable principles of the Law, and the invariable practice of the tribunal, required, on every case of life and death, the agreement of two witnesses on some specific charge. Many were at hand, suborned by the enemies of Jesus and hesitating at no falsehood; but their testimony was so confused, or bore so little on any capital charge, that the court was still further perplexed. At length two witnesses deposed to the misapprehended speech of Jesus, at his first visit to Jerusalem, relating to the destruction of the Temple. But even their depositions were so contradictory, that it was scarcely possible to venture on a conviction upon such loose and incoherent statements. Jesus, in the meantime, preserved a tranquil and total silence. He neither interrupted nor questioned the witnesses, he did not condescend to place himself upon his defence. Nothing, therefore, remained (1) but to question the prisoner, and, if possible, to betray him into criminating himself. The High Priest, rising to give greater energy to his address, and adjuring him in the most solemn manner, in the name of God, to answer the truth, demands whether he is indeed the Messiah, the Christ, the son of the Living God. Jesus at once answers in the affirmative, and adds a distinct allusion to the prediction of Daniel (2), then universally admitted to refer to the reign of the Messiah. His words may be thus paraphrased:—"Ye shall know me for that mighty King described by the prophet; ye shall know me when my great, eternal, and imperishable kingdom shall be established on the ruins of your Theocracy."

JESUS acknowledges himself the Messiah.

Conduct of the High Priest.

The secret joy of the High Priest, though perhaps his devout horror was not altogether insincere, was disguised by the tone and gesture of religious indignation which he assumed. He rent his clothes; an act considered indecorous, almost indecent, in the High Priest, unless justified by an outrage against the established religion so flagrant and offensive as this declaration of Jesus (3). He pronounced his speech (strangely indeed did its lofty tone contrast with the appearance of the prisoner) to be direct and treasonable blasphemy. The whole court, either sharing in the indignation, or

(1) Some have supposed that there were two examinations in different places before the Sanhedrin, one more private in the house of Caiaphas, another more public, in the Gazieth, the chamber in the temple where the Sanhedrin usually sat. But the account of St. John, the most particular of the whole, says expressly (xviii. 28.), that he was carried directly from the house of Caiaphas to the Pretorium of Pilate.

(2) The allusion to this prophecy (Dan. vii. 13, 14) is manifest.

(3) They who judge a blasphemer, first bid the witness to speak out plainly what he hath heard; and when he speaks it, the judges, standing on their feet, rend their garments, and do not sew them up again. Sanhed. i. 7. 10., and Babyl. Genar., in loc.

The High Priest was forbidden to rend his garments in the case of private mourning for the dead. Lev. x. 6., xxi. 10. In the time of public calamity he did. 1 Mac. xi. 71. Joseph B. J. ii. 26. 27.

hurried away by the vehement gesture and commanding influence, of the High Priest, hastily passed the fatal sentence, and declared Jesus guilty of the capital crime.

The insolent soldiery (as he was withdrawn from the court) had now full licence, and perhaps more than the licence, of their superiors to indulge the brutality of their own dispositions. They began to spit on his face—in the East the most degrading insult; they blind-folded him, and struck him with the palms of their hands, and, in their miserable merriment, commanded him to display his prophetic knowledge, by detecting the hand that was raised against him (1).

Jesus insulted by the soldiery.

The dismay, the despair, which had seized upon his adherents, is most strongly exemplified by the denial of Peter. The zealous disciple, after he had obtained admittance into the hall, stood warming himself, in the cool of the dawning morning, probably by a kind of brazier (2). He was first accosted by a female servant, who charged him with being an accomplice of the prisoner: Peter denied the charge with vehemence, and retired to the portico or porch in front of the palace. A second time, another female renewed the accusation: with still more angry protestations Peter disclaimed all connection with his master; and once, but unregarded, the cock crew. An hour afterwards, probably about this time, after the formal condemnation, the charge was renewed by a relation of the man whose ear he had cut off. His harsh Galilean pronunciation had betrayed him as coming from that province; but Peter now resolutely confirmed his denial with an oath. It was the usual time of the second cock-crowing, and again it was distinctly heard. Jesus, who was probably at that time in the outer hall or porch in the midst of the insulting soldiery, turned his face towards Peter, who, overwhelmed with shame and distress, hastily retreated from the sight of his deserted master, and wept the bitter tears of self-reproach and humiliation.

Denial of Peter.

But, although the Sanhedrin had thus passed their sentence, there remained a serious obstacle before it could be carried into execution. On the contested point, whether the Jews, under the Roman government, possessed the power of life and death (3), it is not easy to state the question with brevity and distinctness. Notwithstanding the apparently clear and distinct recognition of the Sanhedrin, that they had not authority to put any man to death (4); notwithstanding the remarkable concurrence of Rabbinical tradition with this declaration, which asserts that the nation had been

Question of the right of the Sanhedrin to inflict capital punishment.

(1) Matt. xxvi. 67, 68.; Mark, xiv. 65.; Luke, xxii. 63, 65.

(2) Matt. xxvi. 58, 69, 75.; Mark, xiv. 54, 66, 72.; Luke, xxii. 54—62.; John, xviii. 15, 16.

(3) The question is discussed in all the commentators. See Lardner, *Credid.*, i. 2.; Bas-

nage, *B. v. c. 2.*; Biscoe on the Acts, c. 6., note to Law's Theory, 147.; but above all Krebs, *Observat.* in *Nov. Test.*, 64—155.; Rosenmüller and Kuinoel, in loc.

(4) John, xviii. 31.

deprived of the power of life and death forty years before the destruction of the city (1), many of the most learned writers, some indeed of the ablest of the fathers (2), from arguments arising out of the practice of Roman provincial jurisprudence, and from later facts in the Evangelic history and that of the Jews, have supposed, that even if, as is doubtful, they were deprived of this power in civil, they retained it in religious, cases. Some have added, that even in the latter, the ratification of the sentence by the Roman governor, or the permission to carry it into execution, was necessary. According to this view, the object of the Sanhedrin was to bring the case before Pilate as a civil charge; since the assumption of a royal title and authority implied a design to cast off the Roman yoke. Or, if they retained the right of capital punishment in religious cases, it was contrary to usage, in the proceedings of the Sanhedrin, as sacred as law itself, to order an execution on the day of preparation for the Passover (3). As then they dared not violate that usage, and as delay was in every way dangerous, either from the sickleness of the people, who having been momentarily wrought up to a pitch of deadly animosity against Jesus, might again, by some act of power or goodness on his part, be carried away back to his side; or, in case of tumult, from the unsolicited intervention of the Romans; their plainest course was to obtain, if possible, the immediate support and assistance of the government.

Real relation of the Sanhedrin to the government.

In my own opinion, formed upon the study of the cotemporary Jewish history, the power of the Sanhedrin, at this period of political change and confusion, on this, as well as on other points, was altogether undefined. Under the Asmonean princes, the sovereign, uniting the civil and religious supremacy, the High-Priesthood with the royal power, exercised, with the Sanhedrin as his council, the highest political and civil jurisdiction. Herod, whose authority depended on the protection of Rome, and was maintained by his wealth, and in part by foreign mercenaries, although he might leave to the Sanhedrin, as the supreme tribunal, the judicial power, and in ordinary religious cases might admit their unlimited jurisdiction; yet no doubt watched and controlled their proceedings with the jealousy of an Asiatic despot, and practically, if not formally, subjected all their decrees to his revision: at least he would not have permitted any encroachment on his own supreme authority. In fact, according to the general tradition of the Jews, he at

(1) *Traditio est quadraginta annos ante excidium templi, ablatum fuisse jus vite et mortis. Hieros. Sanhedr., fol. 18. 1. Ib. fol. 242. Quadraginta annis ante vastatum templum, ablata sunt iudicia capitalia ab Israele.* There is, however, some doubt about the reading and translation of this passage. Wagenet reads four for forty *schlen* (De Syn.) insinuating that the judgments were not taken away, but interrupted and disused.

(2) Among the *Chrysostom and Au*

gustine; among the moderns, Lightfoot, Lardner, Krebs, Rosemüller, Kuinoel. The best discussion on that side of the question appears to me that of Krebs; on the other, that of Basnage.

(3) Cyril and Augustine, with whom Kuinoel is inclined to agree, interpret the words of St John, "It is not lawful for us to put any man to death," by subjoining, "on the day of the Passover."

one time put the whole Sanhedrin to death : and since, as his life advanced, his tyranny became more watchful and suspicious, he was more likely to diminish than increase the powers of the national tribunal. In the short interval of little more than thirty years, which had elapsed since the death of Herod, nearly ten had been occupied by the reign of Archelaus. On his deposal, the Sanhedrin had probably extended or resumed its original functions, but still the supreme civil authority rested in the Roman Procurator. All the commotions excited by the turbulent adventurers who infested the country, or by Judas the Galilean and his adherents, would fall under the cognisance of the civil governor, and were repressed by his direct interference. Nor can capital religious offences have been of frequent occurrence, since it is evident that the rigour of the Mosaic Law had been greatly relaxed, partly by the feebleness of the judicial power, partly by the tendency of the age, which ran in a counter direction to those acts of idolatry against which the Mosaic statutes were chiefly framed, and left few crimes obnoxious to the extreme penalty. Nor, until the existence of their polity and religion was threatened, first by the progress of Christ, and afterwards of his religion, would they have cared to be armed with an authority, which it was rarely, if ever, necessary or expedient to put forth in its full force (1).

This, then, may have been, strictly speaking, a new case, the first which had occurred since the reduction of Judæa to a Roman province. The Sanhedrin, from whom all jurisdiction in political cases was withdrawn; and who had no recent precedent for the infliction of capital punishment on any religious charge, might think it more prudent (particularly during this hurried and tumultuous proceeding, which commenced at midnight, and must be dispatched with the least possible delay) at once to disclaim an authority which, however the Roman governor seemed to attribute to them, he might at last prevent their carrying into execution. All the other motives then operating on their minds would concur in favour of this course of proceeding :—their mistrust of the people, who might attempt a rescue from their feeble and unrespected officers, and could only, if they should fall off to the other side, be controlled by the dread of the Roman military; and the reluctance to profane so sacred a day by a public execution, of which the odium would thus be cast

That of Jesus a new and unprecedented case.

Motives of the rulers in disclaiming their power.

(1) It may be worth observing, that not merely were the pharisaic and sadduceic party at issue on the great question of the expediency of the severe administration of the law, which implied frequency of capital punishment; the latter party being notoriously sanguinary in the execution of public justice; but even in the pharisaic party one school, that of Hillel, was accused (Jost Geschichte der Israeliten), by the rival school of Shammai, of dangerous lenity in the adminis-

tration of the law, and of culpable unwillingness to inflict the punishment of death.

The authority of them, says Lightfoot (from the Rabbins), was not taken away by the Romans, but rather relinquished by themselves. The slothfulness of the council destroyed its own authority. Hear it justly upbraided in this matter :— The council which puts one to death in seven years is called "destructive." R. Lazar Ben Azariah said; which puts one to death in seventy years. Lightfoot, in loc.

on their foreign rulers. It was clearly their policy, at any cost, to secure the intervention of Pilate, as well to insure the destruction of their victim, as to shift the responsibility from their own head upon that of the Romans. They might, not unreasonably, suppose that Pilate, whose relentless disposition had been shown in a recent instance, would not hesitate, at once, and on their authority, on the first intimation of a dangerous and growing party, to act without further examination or inquiry, and without scruple, add one victim more to the robbers or turbulent insurgents who, it appears, were kept in prison, in order to be executed as a terrible example at that period of national concourse.

Jesus before Pilate.

Remorse and death of Judas.

It should seem that while Jesus was sent in chains to the Prætorium of Pilate, whether in the Antonia, the fortress adjacent to the Temple, or in part of Herod's palace, which was connected with the mountain of the Temple by a bridge over the Tyropæon, the council adjourned to their usual place of assemblage, the chamber called Gazith, within the Temple. A deputation only accompanied the prisoner to explain and support the charge, and here probably it was that, in his agony of remorse, Judas brought back the reward that he had received (1); and when the assembly, to his confession of his crime, in betraying the innocent blood, replied with cold and contumelious unconcern, he cast down the money on the pavement, and rushed away to close his miserable life. Nor must the characteristic incident be omitted, the Sanhedrin, who had not hesitated to reward the basest treachery, probably out of the Temple funds, scruple to receive back and replace in the sacred Treasury, the price of blood. The sum, therefore, is set apart for the purchase of a field for the burial of strangers, long known by the name of Aceldama, the field of blood (2). Such is ever the absurdity, as well as the heinousness, of crimes committed in the name of religion.

Astonishment of Pilate.

The first emotion of Pilate at this strange accusation from the great tribunal of the nation, however rumours of the name and influence of Jesus had, no doubt, reached his ears, must have been the utmost astonishment. To the Roman mind the Jewish character was ever an inexplicable problem. But if so when they were seen scattered about and mingled with the countless diversities of races of discordant habits, usages, and religions, which thronged to the metropolis of the world, or were dispersed through the principal cities of the empire; in their own country, where there was, as it were, a concentration of all their extraordinary national propensities, they must have appeared in still stronger opposition to the

(1) Matt. xxvii. 3—10.

(2) The sum appears extremely small for the purchase of a field, even should we adopt the very probable suggestion of Kuinoël, that it was a field in which the fuller's earth had been

worked out, and which was therefore entirely barren and unproductive. Kuinoël, in loc. Matt. xxvii. 2—14.; Mark, xiv. 1—5.; Luke, xxiii. 1—6. John, xviii. 28—38.

rest of mankind. To the loose manner in which religious belief hung on the greater part of the subjects of the Roman empire, their recluse and uncompromising attachment to the faith of their ancestors offered the most singular contrast. Every where else the temples were open, the rites free to the stranger by race or country, who rarely scrupled to do homage to the tutelary deity of the place. The Jewish Temple alone received, indeed, but with a kind of jealous condescension, the offerings even of the Emperor. Throughout the rest of the world, religious enthusiasm might not be uncommon, here and there, in individual cases, particularly in the East: the priests of some of the mystic religions at times excited a considerable body of followers, and drove them blindfold to the wildest acts of superstitious frenzy; but the sudden access of religious fervour was, in general, as transient as violent; the flame burned with rapid and irresistible fury, and went out of itself. The Jews stood alone (according to the language and opinion of the Roman world), as a nation of religious fanatics; and this fanaticism was a deep, a settled, a conscientious feeling, and formed, an essential and inseparable part, the groundwork of their rigid and unsocial character.

Yet even to one familiarised by a residence of several years with the Jewish nation, on the present occasion, the conduct of the Sanhedrin must have appeared utterly unaccountable. This senate, or municipal body, had left to the Roman governor to discover the danger, and suppress the turbulence, of the robbers and insurgents against whom Pilate had taken such decisive measures. Now, however, they appear suddenly seized with an access of loyalty for the Roman authority, and a trembling apprehension of the least invasion of the Roman title to supremacy. And against whom were they actuated by this unwonted caution, and burning with this unprecedented zeal? Against a man who, as far as he could discover, was a harmless, peaceful, and benevolent enthusiast, who had persuaded many of the lower orders to believe in certain unintelligible doctrines, which seemed to have no relation to the government of the country, and were, as yet, no way connected with insurrectionary movements. In fact, he could not but clearly see that they were enemies of the influence obtained by Jesus over the populace; but whether Jesus or the Sanhedrin governed the religious feelings and practices of the people, was a matter of perfect indifference to the Roman supremacy.

The vehemence with which they pressed the charge, and the charge itself, were equally inexplicable. When Pilate referred back, as it were, the judgment to themselves, and offered to leave Jesus to be punished by the existing law; while they shrunk from that responsibility, and disclaimed, at least over such a case and at such a season, the power of life and death, they did not in the least relax

at the conduct of the Sanhedrin.

at the nature of the charge.

the vehement earnestness of their persecution. Jesus was accused of assuming the title of King of the Jews, and with an intention of throwing off the Roman yoke. But, however little Pilate may have heard or understood his doctrines, the conduct and demeanour of Christ were so utterly at variance with such a charge; the only intelligible article in the accusation, his imputed prohibition of the payment of tribute, so unsupported by proof, as to bear no weight. This redoubted king had been seized by the emissaries of the Sanhedrin, perhaps Roman soldiers placed under their orders; had been conveyed without resistance through the city; his few adherents, mostly unarmed peasants, had fled at the instant of his capture; not the slightest tumultuary movement had taken place during his examination before the High Priest, and the popular feeling seemed rather at present incensed against him than inclined to take his part.

The deputation refuse to communicate with Pilate from fear of legal defilement.

To the mind of Pilate, indeed, accustomed to the disconnection of religion and morality, the more striking contradiction in the conduct of the Jewish rulers may not have appeared altogether so extraordinary. At the moment when they were violating the great eternal and immutable principles of all religion, and infringing on one of the positive commandments of their law, by persecuting to death an innocent man, they were witholden by religious scruple from entering the dwelling of Pilate; they were endangering the success of their cause, lest this intercourse with the unclean stranger should exclude them from the worship of their God — a worship for which they contracted no disqualifying defilement by this deed of blood. The deputation stood *without* the hall of Pilate (1); and not even their animosity against Jesus could induce them to depart from that superstitious usage, to lend the weight of their personal appearance to the solemn accusation, or, at all events, to deprive the hated object of their persecution of any advantage which he might receive from undergoing his examination without being confronted with his accusers. Pilate seems to have paid so much respect to their usages, that he went out to receive their charge, and to inquire the nature of the crime for which Jesus was denounced.

Examination before Pilate.

The simple question put to Jesus, on his first interrogatory before Pilate, was whether he claimed the title of King of the Jews (2). The answer of Jesus may be considered as an appeal to the justice and right feeling of the governor. "As Roman prefect, have you any cause for suspecting me of ambitious or insurrectionary designs; do you entertain the least apprehension of my seditious demeanour; or are you not rather adopting the suggestions of my enemies, and lending yourself to their unwarranted animosity?" Pilate disclaims all communion with the passions or the prejudices of the Jewish

(1) John, xviii, 28.

(2) John, xviii 33—37.

rulers; but Jesus had been brought before him, denounced as a dangerous disturber of the public peace, and he was officially bound to take cognisance of such a charge. In the rest of the defence of Christ, the only part intelligible to Pilate would be the unanswerable appeal to the peaceful conduct of his followers. When Jesus asserted that he was a king, yet evidently implied a moral or religious sense in his use of the term, Pilate might attribute a vague meaning to his language, from the Stoic axiom, I am a king when I rule myself (1); and thus give a sense to that which otherwise would have sounded in his ears like unintelligible mysticism. His perplexity, however, must have been greatly increased when Jesus, in this perilous hour, when his life trembled, at it were, on the balance, declared that the object of his birth and of his life was the establishment of "the truth." "To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." That the peace of a nation or the life of an individual should be endangered on account of the truth or falsehood of any system of speculative opinions, was so diametrically opposite to the general opinion and feeling of the Roman world, that Pilate, either in contemptuous mockery, or with the merciful design of showing the utter harmlessness and insignificance of such points, inquired what he meant by truth, — what truth had to do with the present question, with a question of life and death, with a capital charge brought by the national council before the supreme tribunal. Apparently despairing, on one side, of bringing him, whom he seems to have considered a blameless enthusiast, to his senses; on the other, unwilling to attach so much importance to what appeared to him in so different a light, he wished at once to put an end to the whole affair. He abruptly left Jesus, and went out again to the Jewish deputation at the gate, (now perhaps increased by a greater number of the Sanhedrin,) and declared his conviction of the innocence of Jesus.

Pilate endeavours to save Jesus.

At this unexpected turn, the Sanhedrin burst into a furious clamour, reiterated their vague, perhaps contradictory, and to the ears of Pilate unintelligible or insignificant charges, and seemed determined to press the conviction with implacable animosity. Pilate turned to Jesus, who had been led out, to demand his answer to these charges. Jesus stood collected, but silent, and the astonishment of Pilate was still further heightened. The only accusation which seemed to bear any meaning, imputed to Jesus the raising tumultuous meetings of the people throughout the country, from Judæa to Galilee (2). This incidental mention of Galilee, made perhaps with an invidious design of awakening in the mind of the go-

clamours of the accusers.

(1) *Ad summum sapiens uno minor est Jove, dives Liber, honoratus, pulcher Rex denique regum*
Hor. Ep. ii. 1. 106. Comp. Sat. i. 3. 125.

At pueri ludentes, rex eris, inquit,
Si recte facies. Epist. i. 1. 59.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 5.

vernor the remembrance of the turbulent character of that people, suggested to Pilate a course by which he might rid himself of the embarrassment and responsibility of this strange transaction. It has been conjectured, not without probability, that the massacre of Herod's subjects was the cause of the enmity that existed between the tetrarch and the Roman governor. Pilate had now an opportunity at once to avoid an occurrence of the same nature, in which he had no desire to be implicated, and to make overtures of reconciliation to the native sovereign. He was indifferent about the fate of Jesus, provided he could shake off all actual concern in his death; or he might suppose that Herod, uninfected with the inexplicable enmity of the chief priests, might be inclined to protect his innocent subject (1).

Jesus sent
back to Herod.

Jesus sent
back with
insult.

The fame of Jesus had already excited the curiosity of Herod, but his curiosity was rather that which sought amusement or excitement from the powers of an extraordinary wonder-worker, than that which looked for information or improvement from a wise moral, or a divinely-commissioned religious, teacher. The circumstances of the interview, which probably took place in the presence of the tetrarch and his courtiers, and into which none of the disciples of Jesus could find their way, are not related. The investigation was long; but Jesus maintained his usual unruffled silence, and at the close of the examination, he was sent back to Pilate. By the murder of John, Herod had incurred deep and lasting unpopularity; he might be unwilling to increase his character for cruelty by the same conduct towards Jesus, against whom, as he had not the same private reasons for requiring his support, he had not the same bitterness of personal animosity; nor was his sovereignty, as has before been observed, endangered in the same manner as that of the chief priests, by the progress of Jesus. Herod therefore might treat with derision what appeared to him an harmless assumption of royalty, and determine to effect, by contempt and contumely, that degradation of Jesus in the estimation of the people which his more cruel measures in the case of John had failed to accomplish. With his connivance, therefore, if not under his instructions, his soldiers (perhaps some of them,—as those of his father had been, foreigners, Gaulish or Thracian barbarians) were permitted or encouraged in every kind of cruel and wanton insult. They clothed him, in mockery of his royal title, in a purple robe, and so escorted him back to Pilate, who, if he occupied part of the Herodion, not the Antonia, was close at hand, only in a different quarter of the same extensive palace.

The refusal of Herod to take cognisance of the charge renewed the embarrassment of Pilate, but a way yet seemed open to extricate

himself from his difficulty. There was a custom, that in honour of the great festival, the Passover, a prisoner should be set at liberty at the request of the people (1). The multitude had already become clamorous for their annual privilege. Among the half-robbers, half-insurgents, who had so long infested the province of Judæa and the whole of Palestine, there was a celebrated bandit, named Barabbas, who, probably in some insurrectionary tumult, had been guilty of murder. Of the extent of his crime we are ignorant ; but Pilate, by selecting the worst case, that which the people could not but consider the most atrocious and offensive to the Roman government, might desire to force them, as it were, to demand the release of Jesus. Barabbas had been undeniably guilty of those overt acts of insubordination, which they endeavoured to infer as necessary consequences of the teaching of Jesus.

Barabbas.

He came forth, therefore, to the outside of his prætorium, and having declared that neither himself nor Herod could discover any real guilt in the prisoner who had been brought before them, he appealed to them to choose between the condemned insurgent and murderer, and the blameless prophet of Nazareth. The High Priests had now wrought the people to madness, and had most likely crowded the courts round Pilate's quarters with their most zealous and devoted partizans. The voice of the Governor was drowned with an instantaneous burst of acclamation, demanding the release of Barabbas. Pilate made yet another ineffectual attempt to save the life of the innocent man. He thought by some punishment, short of death, if not to awaken the compassion, to satisfy the animosity, of the people (2). The person of Jesus was given up to the lictors, and scourging with rods, the common Roman punishment for minor offences, was inflicted with merciless severity. The soldiers platted a crown of thorns, or, as is thought, of some prickly plant, as it is scarcely conceivable that life could have endured if the temples had been deeply pierced by a circle of thorns (3). In this pitiable state Jesus was again led forth, bleeding with the scourge, his brow throbbing with the pointed crown ; and drest in the purple robe of mockery to make the last vain appeal to the compassion, the humanity, of the people. The wild and furious cries of " crucify him, crucify him," broke out on all sides. In vain Pilate commanded them to be the executioners of their own sentence, and reasserted his conviction of the innocence of Jesus. In vain he accompanied his assertion by the significant action of washing his hands in the public view, as if to show that he would contract no guilt or defilement from the blood of a blameless man (4). He was

Jesus
crowned
with
thorns and
shown to
the people.

(1) Matt. xxvii. 15—20.; Mark, xv. 6—11.; Luke, xxiii. 13—19.; John, xviii. 39.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 16.; John, xix. 1—5.

(3) It should seem, says Grotius, that the mockery was more intended than the pain. Some

suppose the plant, the naba or nabka of the Arabians—with many small and sharp spikes,—which would be painful, but not endanger life. Ras-
selquist's Travels.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 24. 25

The people demand his crucifixion.

answered by the awful imprecation, "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." The deputies of the Sanhedrin pressed more earnestly the capital charge of blasphemy—"He had made himself the Son of God (1)." This inexplicable accusation still more shook the resolution of Pilate, who, perhaps at this instant, was further agitated by a message from his wife. Claudia Procula (the law which prohibited the wives of the provincial rulers from accompanying their husbands to the seat of their governments now having fallen into disuse) had been permitted to reside with her husband Pilate in Palestine (2). The stern justice of the Romans had guarded by this law against the baneful effects of female influence. In this instance, had Pilate listened to the humaner counsels of his wife, from what a load of guilt would he have delivered his own conscience and his province. Aware of the proceedings which had occupied Pilate during the whole night; perhaps in some way better acquainted with the character of Jesus, she had gone to rest; but her sleep, her morning slumbers, when visions were supposed to be more than ordinarily true, were disturbed by dreams of the innocence of Jesus, and the injustice and inhumanity to which her husband might lend his authority.

Intercession of Pilate's wife.

The prisoner was withdrawn into the guard-room, and Pilate endeavoured to obtain some explanation of the meaning of this new charge from Jesus himself. He made no answer, and Pilate appealed to his fears, reminding him that his life and death depended on the power of the Prefect. Jesus replied, that his life was only in the power of divine Providence, by whose permission alone Pilate enjoyed a temporary authority (3). But touched, it may seem, by the exertions of Pilate to save him, with all his accustomed gentleness he declares Pilate guiltless of his blood, in comparison with his betrayers and persecutors among his own countrymen. This speech still further moved Pilate in his favour. But the justice and the compassion of the Roman gave way at once before the fear of weakening his interest, or endangering his personal safety, with his imperial master. He made one effort more to work on the implacable people; he was answered with the same furious exclamations, and with menaces of more alarming import. They accused him of indifference to the stability of the imperial power:—"Thou art not Cæsar's friend (4):" they threatened to report his conduct, in thus allowing the title of royalty to be assumed with impunity, to the reigning Cæsar. That Cæsar was the dark and jealous Tiberius. Up to this period the Jewish nation, when they had complained of the tyranny of their native sovereigns, had ever obtained a favourable

Last interrogatory of Jesus.

(1) John, xix. 7.

(2) Matt. xxvii. 19—23. This law had fallen into neglect in the time of Augustus; during the reign of Tiberius it was openly infringed, and the motion of Cæcina in the Senate to put it more

strictly in force, produced no effect. Tac. Ann. iii. 33.

(3) John, xix. 8—11.

(4) John, xix. 12.

hearing at Rome. Even against Herod the Great, their charges had been received; they had been admitted to a public audience, and though their claim to national independence at the death of that sovereign had not been allowed, Archelaus had received his government with limited powers: and on the complaint of the people, had been removed from his throne. In short, the influence of that attachment to the Cæsarean family (1), which had obtained for the nation distinguished privileges both from Julius and Augustus, had not yet been effaced by that character of turbulence and insubordination which led to their final ruin.

In what manner such a charge of not being "Caesar's friend" might be misrepresented or aggravated, it was impossible to conjecture, but the very strangeness of the accusation was likely to work on the gloomy and suspicious mind of Tiberius; and the frail tenure by which Pilate held his favour at Rome is shown by his ignominious recall and banishment some years after, *on the complaint of the Jewish people*; though not, it is true, for an act of indiscreet mercy, but one of unnecessary cruelty. The latent and suspended decision of his character reappeared in all its customary recklessness. The life of one man, however blameless, was not for an instant to be considered, when his own advancement, his personal safety, were in peril: his sterner nature resumed the ascendant; he mounted the tribunal, which was erected on a tessellated pavement near the prætorium (2), and passed the solemn, the irrevocable sentence. It might almost seem, that in bitter mockery, Pilate for the last time demanded, "Shall I crucify your king?" "We have no king, but Caesar," was the answer of the chief priests. Pilate yielded up the contest; the murderer was commanded to be set at liberty, the just man surrendered to crucifixion.

Condemnation of Jesus.

The remorseless soldiery were at hand, and instigated, no doubt, by the influence, by the bribes, of the Sanhedrin, carried the sentence into effect with the most savage and wanton insults. They dressed him up in all the mock semblance of royalty (he had already the purple robe and the crown); a reed was now placed in his hand for a sceptre; they paid him their insulting homage; struck him with the palms of their hands; spit upon him; and then stripping him of his splendid attire, drest him again in his own simple raiment, and led him out to death (3).

Insults of Jesus by the populace and soldiery.

The place of execution was without the gates. This was the case

(1) Compare Hist. of the Jews, ii. 86.

(2) We should not notice the strange mistake of the learned German, Hug, on this subject, if it had not been adopted by a clever writer in a popular journal. Hug has supposed the λιθόστρωτον (perhaps the tessellated) stone pavement on which Pilate's tribunal was erected, to be the same which was the scene of a remarkable incident mentioned by Josephus. During the siege of the Temple, a centurion, Julianus,

charged on horseback, and forced his way into the inner court of the Temple, his horse stepped up on the pavement (λιθόστρωτον), and he fell. It is scarcely credible that any writer acquainted with Jewish antiquities, or the structure of the Temple, could suppose that the Roman governor would raise his tribunal within the inviolable precincts of the inner court.

(3) Matt. xxvii. 27—30.; Mark, xv. 15—20.

in most towns; and in Jerusalem, which, according to tradition, always maintained a kind of resemblance to the camp in the wilderness (1), as criminal punishments were forbidden to defile the sacred precincts, a field beyond the walls was set apart and desecrated for this unhallowed purpose (2).

Hitherto we have been tempted into some detail, both by the desire of ascertaining the state of the public mind, and the motives of the different actors in this unparalleled transaction, and by the necessity of harmonising the various circumstances related in the four separate narratives. As we approach the appalling close, we tremble lest the colder process of explanation should deaden the solemn and harrowing impression of the scene, or weaken the contrast between the wild and tumultuous uproar of the triumphant enemies and executioners of the Son of Man, with the deep and unutterable misery of the few faithful adherents who still followed his footsteps: and, far above all, his own serene, his more than human, composure, the dignity of suffering, which casts so far into the shade every example of human heroism. Yet in the most trifling incidents there is so much life and reality, so remarkable an adherence to the usages of the time, and to the state of public feeling, that we cannot but point out the most striking of these particulars. For, in fact, there is no single circumstance, however minute, which does not add to the truth of the whole description, so as to stamp it (we have honestly endeavoured to consider it with the calmest impartiality) with an impression of credibility, of certainty, equal to, if not surpassing, every event in the history of man. The inability of Jesus (exhausted by a sleepless night, by the length of the trial, by insults and bodily pain, by the scourging and the blows) to bear his own cross (the constant practice of condemned criminals) (3); the seizure of a Cyrenian, from a province more numerously colonised by Jews than any other, except Egypt and Babylonia, as he was entering the city, and, perhaps, was known to be an adherent of Jesus, to bear his cross (4); the customary deadening potion of wine and myrrh (5), which was given to malefactors previous to their execution, but which Jesus, aware of its stupifying or intoxicating effect, and determined to preserve his firmness and self-command, but slightly touched with his lips; the title, the King (6) of the Jews, in three

Circum-
stances of
the cruci-
fixion.

(1) Numbers, xv. 35.; 1 Kings, xxi. 13.; Hebrews, xiii. 12. Extra urbem, patibulum. Plautus. See Grotius.

(2) It is curious to trace on what uncertain grounds rest many of our established notions relating to incidents in the early history of our religion. No one scruples to speak in the popular language of "the Hill of Calvary;" yet there appears no evidence, which is not purely legendary, for the assertion that Calvary was on a hill. The notion arose from the fanciful interpretation of the word Golgotha, the place of a skull, which was thought to imply some resem-

blance in its form to a human skull; but it is far more probably derived from having been strewn with the remains of condemned malefactors.

(3) Hence the common term "furcifer." Patibulum ferat per urbem, deinde affligatur cruci. Plauti frag.

(4) Mark, xv. 21; Luke, xxiii. 26.

(5) Matt. xxvii. 34.; Mark, xv. 23. The Rabbins say, wine with frankincense. This potion was given by the Jews out of compassion to criminals.

(6) Luke, xxiii. 38; John, xix. 19, 20.

languages (1), so strictly in accordance with the public usage of the time; the division and casting lots for his garments by the soldiers who executed him (those who suffered the ignominious punishment of the cross being exposed entirely naked, or with nothing more than was necessary for decency) (2); all these particulars, as well as the instrument of execution, the cross, are in strict unison with the well-known practice of Roman criminal jurisprudence. The execution of the two malefactors, one on each side of Jesus, is equally consonant with their ordinary administration of justice, particularly in this ill-fated province. Probably before, unquestionably at a later period, Jerusalem was doomed to behold the long line of crosses on which her sons were left by the relentless Roman authorities to struggle with slow and agonising death.

In other circumstances, the Jewish national character is equally conspicuous. This appears even in the conduct of the malefactors. The fanatical Judaism of one, not improbably a follower, or infected with the doctrines of the Gaulonite, even in his last agony, has strength enough to insult the pretender to the name of a Messiah who yet has not the power to release himself and his fellow-sufferers from death. The other, of milder disposition, yet in death, inclines to believe in Jesus, and when he returns to assume his kingdom, would hope to share in its blessings. To him Jesus, speaking in the current language promises an immediate reward; he is to pass at once from life to happiness (3). Besides this, how striking the triumph of his enemies, as he seemed to surrender himself without resistance to the growing pangs of death; the assemblage, not only of the rude and ferocious populace, but of many of the most distinguished rank, the members of the Sanhedrin, to behold and to insult the last moments of their once re-doubted, but now despised, adversary. And still every indication of approaching death seemed more and more to justify their rejection! still no sign of the mighty, the all-powerful Messiah! Their taunting allusions to his royal title, to his misapprehended speech, which rankled in their hearts, about the demolition and rebuilding of the Temple (4); to his power of healing others, and restoring life, a power in his own case so manifestly suspended or lost; the offer to acknowledge him as the Messiah, if he would come down from the cross in the face of day; the still more malignant reproach, that he, who had boasted of the peculiar favour of God, was now so visibly deserted and abandoned,—the son of God, as he called himself, is left to perish despised and disregarded

The two
malefac-
tors.

Spectators
of the
execution.

(1) The inscriptions on the palisades which divided the part of the temple court which might be entered by the Gentiles from that which was open only to the Jews, were written, with the Roman sanction, in the three languages, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin.

(2) Matt. xxvii. 35.; Mark, xv. 24.; Luke, xxiii. 34.; John, xix. 23, 24.

(3) Luke, xxiii. 39—43.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 39—43.; Mark, xv. 31, 32. Luke, xxiii. 35.

by God; all this as strikingly accords with, and illustrates the state of, Jewish feeling, as the former circumstances of the Roman usages.

Conduct
of Jesus.

And amid the whole wild and tumultuous scene there are some quiet gleams of pure Christianity, which contrast with and relieve the general darkness and horror: not merely the superhuman patience, with which insult, and pain, and ignominy, are borne; not merely the serene self-command, which shows that the senses are not benumbed or deadened by the intensity of suffering; but the slight incidental touches of gentleness and humanity (1). We cannot but indicate the answer to the afflicted women, who stood by the way weeping, as he passed on to Calvary, and whom he commanded not "to weep for him," but for the deeper sorrows to which themselves or their children were devoted; the notice of the group of his own kindred and followers who stood by the cross; his bequest of the support of his Virgin Mother to the beloved disciple (2); above all, that most affecting exemplification of his own tenets, the prayer for the pardon of his enemies, the palliation of their crime from their ignorance of its real enormity,—"Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do (3)." Yet so little are the Evangelists studious of effect, that this incident of unrivalled moral sublimity, even in the whole life of Christ, is but briefly, we might almost say carelessly, noticed by St. Luke alone.

Preternatural
darkness.

From the sixth hour (noonday), writes the Evangelists St. Matthew, there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour (4). The whole earth (the phrase in the other Evangelists) is no doubt used according to Jewish phraseology, in which Palestine, the sacred land, was emphatically the earth. This supernatural gloom appears to resemble that terrific darkness which precedes an earthquake.

For these three hours Jesus had borne the excruciating anguish—his human nature begins to fail, and he complains of the burning thirst, the most painful but usual aggravation of such a death. A compassionate bystander filled a sponge with vinegar, fixed it on a long reed, and was about to lift it to his lips, when the dying Jesus uttered his last words, those of the twenty-second Psalm, in which, in the bitterness of his heart, David had complained of the manifest desertion of his God, who had yielded him up to his enemies—the phrase had perhaps been in common use in extreme distress—Eli, Eli, lama Sabachthani?—My God, my God, why hast

(1) Luke, xxiii. 27—31.

(2) John, xix. 25—27.

(3) Luke, xxiii. 34.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 45—53.; Mark, xv. 33—38.; Luke, xxiii. 44, 45.; John, xix. 28—30.

Gibbon has said, and truly, as regards all well-informed and sober interpreters of the

sacred writings, that "the celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned." It still maintains its ground, however, with writers of a certain class, notwithstanding its irrelevancy has already been admitted by Origen, and its authority rejected by every writer who has the least pretensions to historical criticism.

thou forsaken me (1)? The compassionate hand of the man, raising the vinegar, was arrested by others, who, a few perhaps in trembling curiosity, but more in bitter mockery, supposing that he called not on God (Eli) but on Elias, commanded him to wait and see, whether, even now, that great and certain sign of the Messiah, the appearance of Elijah, would at length take place.

Their barbarous triumph was uninterrupted; and he, who yet (his followers were not without some lingering hope, and the more superstitious of his enemies not without some trembling apprehension) might awaken to all his terrible and prevailing majesty, had now manifestly expired (2). The Messiah, the imperishable, the eternal Messiah, had quietly yielded up the ghost.

Death of
Jesus.

Even the dreadful earthquake which followed, seemed to pass away without appalling the enemies of Jesus. The rending of the veil of the Temple from the top to the bottom, so strikingly significant of the approaching abolition of the local worship, would either be concealed by the priesthood, or attributed as a natural effect to the convulsion of the earth. The same convulsion would displace the stones which covered the ancient tombs, and lay open many of the innumerable rock-hewn sepulchres which perforated the hills on every side of the city, and expose the dead to public view. To the awe-struck and depressed minds of the followers of Jesus, no doubt, were confined those visionary appearances of the spirits of their deceased brethren, which are obscurely intimated in the rapid narratives of the Evangelists (3).

But these terrific appearances, which seem to have been lost on the infatuated Jews, were not without effect on the less prejudiced Roman soldiery; they appeared to bear the testimony of Heaven to the innocence, to the divine commission, of the crucified Jesus. The centurion who guarded the spot according to St. Luke, declared aloud his conviction that Jesus was a just man; according to St. Matthew, that he was the Son of God (4).

Secure now, by the visible marks of dissolution, by the piercing of his side, from which blood and water flowed out, that Jesus was actually dead; and still, even in their most irreligious acts of cruelty and wickedness, punctiliously religious (since it was a sin to leave the body of that blameless being on the cross during one day (5),

Burial of
Jesus.

(1) Matt. xxvii. 46.; Mark, xv 34—37.; John, xix. 28—30.

(2) Luke, xxiii. 46.

(3) This is the probable and consistent view of Michaelis. Those who assert a supernatural eclipse of the sun rest on the most dubious and suspicious tradition; while those who look with jealousy on the introduction of natural causes, however so timed as in fact to be no less extraordinary than events altogether contrary to the course of nature, forget or despise the difficulty of accounting for the apparently slight sensation produced on the minds of the Jews, and the total

silence of all other history. Compare the very sensible Note of M. Guizot on the latter part of Gibbon's xvth chapter.

(4) Matt. xxvii. 54.; Luke, xxiii. 47. Lightfoot supposes that by intercourse with the Jews he may have learned their phraseology: Grotius, that he had a general impression that Jesus was a superior being.

(5) Deut. xxi. 23. The Jews usually buried executed criminals ignominiously, but at the request of a family would permit a regular burial. Lightfoot, from Babyl. : an.

whom it had been no sin, but rather an act of the highest virtue to murder (the day before), the Sanhedrin gave their consent to a wealthy adherent of Jesus, Joseph, of the town of Arimathea, to bury the body. The sanction of Pilate was easily obtained : it was taken down from the cross, and consigned to the sepulchre prepared by Joseph for his own family, but in which no body had yet been laid (1). The sepulchre was at no great distance from the place of execution : the customary rites were performed ; the body was wrapped in fine linen and anointed with a mixture of costly spice and myrrh, with which the remains of those who were held in respect by their kindred were usually preserved. As the Sabbath was drawing on, the work was performed with the utmost despatch, and Jesus was laid to rest in the grave of his faithful adherent.

The religion apparently a
an end.

In that rock-hewn tomb might appear to be buried for ever both the fears of his enemies and the hopes of his followers. Though some rumours of his predictions concerning his resurrection had crept abroad, sufficient to awaken the caution of the Sanhedrin, and to cause them to seal the outward covering of the sepulchre, and, with the approbation of Pilate, to station a Roman guard upon the spot; yet, as far as the popular notion of the Messiah, nothing could be more entirely and absolutely destructive of their hopes than the patient submission of Jesus to insult, to degradation, to death. However, with some of milder nature, his exquisite sufferings might excite compassion ; however the savage and implacable cruelty with which the rulers urged his fate might appear revolting to the multitude, after their first access of religious indignation had passed away, and the recollection returned to the gentle demeanour and beneficent acts of Jesus ; yet the hope of redemption, whatever meaning they might attach to the term, whether deliverance from their enemies or the restoration of their theocratic government, had set in utter darkness. However vague or contradictory this notion among the different sects or classes, with the mass of the people, nothing less than an immediate instantaneous re-appearance in some appalling or imposing form could have reinstated Jesus in his high place in the popular expectation. Without this, his career was finally closed, and he would pass away at once, as one of the brief wonders of the time, his temporary claims to respect or attachment refuted altogether by the shame, by the ignominy, of his death. His ostensible leading adherents were men of the humblest origin, and, as yet, of no distinguished ability ; men from whom little danger could be apprehended, and who might safely be treated with contemptuous neglect. No attempt appears to have been made to secure a single person, or to prevent their peaceful retreat to their native Galilee. The whole religion centered in the

(1) Matt. xxviii. 57—60 . Mark, xvi. 42—47 . Luke, xxiv. 50—56 . John, xix. 38—42

person of Jesus, and in his death was apparently suppressed, crushed, extinguished for ever. After a few days, the Sanhedrin would dread nothing less than a new disturbance from the same quarter ; and Pilate, as the whole affair had passed off without tumult, would soon suppress the remonstrances of his conscience at the sacrifice of an innocent life, since the public peace had been maintained, and no doubt his own popularity with the leading Jews considerably heightened, at so cheap a price. All then was at an end : yet, after the death of Christ, commences, strictly speaking, the history of Christianity.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

THE RESURRECTION, AND FIRST PROMULGATION OF CHRISTIANITY.

Christian doctrine of the immortality of the soul.

THE resurrection of Jesus is the basis of Christianity ; it is the groundwork of the *Christian* doctrine of the immortality of the soul. Henceforward that great truth begins to assume a new character, and to obtain an influence over the political and social, as well as over the individual happiness of man, unknown in the former ages of the world (1). It is no longer a feeble and uncertain instinct, nor a remote speculative opinion, obscured by the more pressing necessities and cares of the present life, but the universal predominant sentiment, constantly present to the thoughts, enwoven with the usages, and pervading the whole moral being of man. The dim and scattered rays, either of traditionary belief, of intuitive feeling, or of philosophic reasoning, were brought as it were to a focus, condensed and poured with an immeasurably stronger, an expanding, an all-permeating light upon the human soul (2). Whatever its origin, whether in human nature, or the aspirations of high-thoughted individuals, propagated through their followers, or in former revelation, it received such an impulse, and was so deeply and universally moulded up with the popular mind in all orders, that from this period may be dated the true era of its dominion. If by no means new in its elementary principle, it was new in the degree and the extent to which it began to operate in the affairs of men (3).

(1) Our Saviour assumes the doctrine of another life, as the basis of his doctrines, because, in a certain sense, it was already the popular belief among the Jews, but it is very different with the Apostles, when they address the heathen, who formed far the largest part of the converts to Christianity.

(2) I have found some of these observations and even expressions, anticipated by the striking remarks of Lessing. Und so ward Christus der erste zuverlässige praktische Lehrer der Unsterblichkeit der Seele. Der erste zuverlässige Lehrer. Zuverlässig durch seine Weissagungen, die in ihm erfüllt schienen : zuverlässig durch die Wunder die er verrichtete : zuverlässig durch seine eigne Wiederbelebung nach einem Tode, durch die er seine Lehre versiegelt hatte. Der erste praktische Lehrer. Denn ein anders ist, die Unsterblichkeit der Seele, als eine philosophische

Speculation, vermuthen, wünschen, glauben ein anders seine innern und äussern Handlungen darnach einrichten. Lessing. Werke, ix. p. 63.

(3) The most remarkable evidence of the extent to which German speculation has wandered away from the first principles of Christianity is this ; that one of the most religious writers, the one who has endeavoured with the most earnest sincerity to reconnect religious belief with the philosophy of the times, has actually represented Christianity without, or almost without, the immortality of the soul ; and this the ardent and eloquent translator of Plato ! Copious and full on the moral regeneration effected by Christ in this world, with the loftiest sentiments of the emancipation of the human soul from the bondage of sin by the gospel, Schleiermacher is silent, or almost silent, on the redemption from death. He beholds Christ distinctly as bringing life, only

The calm inquirer into the history of human nature, as displayed in the existing records of our race, if unhappily disinclined to receive the Christian faith as a divine revelation, must nevertheless behold in this point of time the crisis, and in this circumstance the governing principle, of the destinies of mankind during many centuries of their most active and fertile development. A new race of passions was introduced into the political arena, as well as into the individual heart, or rather the natural and universal passions were enlisted in the service of more absorbing and momentous interests. The fears and hopes by which man is governed, took a wider range, embracing the future life in many respects with as much, or even stronger, energy and intenseness than the present. The stupendous dominion erected by the church, the great characteristic feature of modern history, rested almost entirely on this basis; it ruled as possessing an inherent power over the destiny of the soul in a future world. It differed in this primary principle of its authority from the sacerdotal castes of antiquity. The latter rested their influence on hereditary claims to superiority over the rest of mankind; and though they dealt sometimes, more or less largely, in the terrors and hopes of another state of being, especially in defence of their own power and privileges, theirs was as a kind of mixed aristocracy of birth and priestcraft. But if this new and irresistible power lent itself, in certain stages of society, to human ambition, and as a stern and inflexible lictor, bowed down the whole mind of man to the fasces of a spiritual tyranny, it must be likewise contemplated in its far wider and more lasting, though perhaps less imposing character, as the parent of all which is purifying, ennobling, unselfish, in Christian civilisation; as a principle of every humanising virtue which philosophy must ever want; of self-sacrifice, to which the patriotism of antiquity shrinks into a narrow and national feeling: and as introducing a doctrine of equality as sublime, as it is without danger to the necessary gradations which must exist in human society. Since the promulgation of Christianity, the immortality of the soul, and its inseparable consequence, future retribution, have not only been assumed by the legislator as the basis of all political

vaguely and remotely as bringing immortality, to light. I acknowledge that I mistrusted the extent of my own acquaintance with the writings of Schleiermacher and the accuracy with which I had read them (chiefly the Glaubenslehre and some of those sermons which were so highly admired at Berlin); but I have found my own conclusions confirmed by an author whom I cannot suspect to be unacquainted with the writings, or unjust to the character, of one for whom he entertains the most profound respect. So geschah es, dass dieser Glaubenslehre unter den Händen der Begriff des Heiles sich aus einem wesentlich jenseitigen in einem wesentlich diesseitigen verwandelte.... Hiermit ist nun aber die eigentliche Bedeutung des alten Glaubensgrundsatzes in der

that verloren gegangen. Wo die aussicht auf eine dereinstige, aus dem dann in Schauen ungesetzten Glauben emporwachsende Seligkeit so, wie in Schleiermacher's eigener Darstellung in den Hintergrund tritt, so ganz nur als eine beiläufige, in Bezug auf das Wie ganz und gar problematisch bleibende Folgerung, ja fast als eine hors d'œuvre hinzugebracht wird: da wird auch demjenigen Bewusstsein welches seine diesseitige Befriedigung in dem Glauben an Christus gewonnen hat, offenbar seine mächtigste, ja seine einzige Waffe gegen alle die ihn die Wahrheit solcher Befriedigung bestreiten, oder bezweifeln, aus den Händen gerissen. Weisst, Die Evangelische Geschichte, Band. II. p. 451.

institutions, but the general mind has been brought into such complete unison with the spirit of the laws so founded, that the individual repugnance to the principle has been constantly overborne by the general predominant sentiment. In some periods it has seemed to survive the religion on which it was founded. Wherever, at all events, it operates upon the individual or social mind, wherever it is even tacitly admitted and assented to by the prevalent feeling of mankind, it must be traced to the profound influence which Christianity has, at least at one time, exercised over the inner nature of man. This was the moral revolution which set into activity, before unprecedented, and endowed with vitality, till then unknown, this great ruling agent in the history of the world.

Style of
the Evan-
gelists.

Still, however, as though almost unconscious of the future effects of this event, the narratives of the Evangelists as they approach this crisis in their own, as well as in the destinies of man, preserve their serene and unempassioned flow. Each follows his own course, with precisely that discrepancy which might be expected among inartificial writers relating the same event, without any mutual understanding or reference to each other's work, but all with the same equable and unexalted tone.

The Sabbath passed away without disturbance or commotion. The profound quiet which prevailed in the crowded capital of Judæa on the seventh day, at these times of rigid ceremonial observance, was unbroken by the partizans of Jesus. Yet even the Sabbath did not restrain the leading members of the Sanhedrin from taking the necessary precautions to guard the body of their victim: their hostile jealousy, as has been before observed, was more alive to the predictions of the resurrection than the attachment of the disciples. To prevent any secret or tumultuous attempt of the followers to possess themselves of the remains of their Master, they caused a seal to be attached to the stone which formed the door to the sepulchral enclosure, and stationed the guard, which was at their disposal, probably for the preservation of the public peace, in the garden around the tomb. The guard being Roman, might exercise their military functions on the sacred day. The disciples were no doubt restrained by the sanctity of the Sabbath, as well as by their apprehensions of re-awakening the popular indignation, even from approaching the burial-place of their Master. The religion of the day lulled alike the passions of the rulers, the popular tumult, the fears and the sorrows of the disciples.

The women at the
sepulchre.

It was not till the early dawn of the following morning (1) that some of the women set out to pay the last melancholy honours at the

sepulchre. They had bought some of those precious drugs, which were used for the preservation of the remains of the more opulent, on the evening of the crucifixion; and though the body had been anointed and wrapt in spices in the customary manner, previously to the burial, this further mark of respect was strictly according to usage. But this circumstance, thus casually mentioned, clearly shows that the women, at least, had no hope whatever of any change which could take place as to the body of Jesus (1). The party of women consisted of Mary of Magdala, a town near the lake of Tiberias; Mary, the wife of Alpheus, mother of James and Josès; Joanna, wife of Chuza, Herod's steward; and Salome "the mother of Zebedee's children." They were all Galileans, and from the same neighbourhood; all faithful attendants on Jesus, and related to some of the leading disciples. They set out very early; and as perhaps they had to meet from different quarters, some not unlikely from Bethany, the sun was rising before they reached the garden. Before their arrival, the earthquake or atmospheric commotion (2) had taken place; the tomb had burst open; and the terrified guard had fled to the city. Of the sealing of the stone, and the placing of the guard they appear to have been ignorant, as, in the most natural manner, they seem suddenly to remember the difficulty of removing the ponderous stone which closed the sepulchre, and which would require the strength of several men to raise it from its place. Sepulchres in the East, those at least belonging to men of rank and opulence, were formed of an outward small court or enclosure, the entrance to which was covered by a huge stone; and within were cells or chambers, often hewn in the solid rock, for the deposit of the dead. As the women drew near, they saw that the stone had been removed and the first glance into the open sepulchre discovered that the body was no longer there. At this sight Mary Madalene appears to have hurried back to the city, to give information to Peter and John. These disciples, it may be remembered, where the only two who followed Jesus to his trial; and it is likely that they were together in some part of the city, while the rest were scattered in different quarters, or perhaps had retired to Bethany. During the absence of Mary, the other women made a closer inspection; they entered the inner

(1) In a prolusion of Griesbach, *De fontibus uide Evangeliste suas de resurrectione Domini narrationes hausierint*, it is observed, that the Evangelists seem to have dwelt on those particular points in which they were personally concerned. This appears to furnish a very simple key to their apparent discrepancies. John, who received his first intelligence from Mary Magd., makes her the principal person in his narrative, while Matthew, who, with the rest of the disciples, derived his information from the other women, gives their relation, and omits the appearance of Jesus to the Magdalene. St. Mark

gives a few additional minute particulars, but the narrative of St. Luke is altogether more vague and general. He blends together, as a later historian, studious of compression, the two separate transactions; he ascribes to the women collectively that communication of the intelligence to the assembled body of the Apostles which appears to have been made separately to two distinct parties; and disregarding the order of time, he after that reverts to the visit of St. Peter to the sepulchre.

(2) *Σεσσηπτε* is rather an ambiguous term, though it usually means an earthquake.

chamber, they saw the grave-clothes lying in an orderly manner, the bandage or covering of the head rolled up, and placed on one side;—this circumstance would appear incompatible with the haste of a surreptitious, or the carelessness of a violent, removal. To their minds thus highly excited, and bewildered with astonishment, with terror, and with grief, appeared, what is described by the Evangelist as “a vision of angels.” One or more beings in human form seated in the shadowy twilight within the sepulchre, and addressing them with human voices, told them that their Master had risen from the grave, that he was to go before them into Galilee. They had departed to communicate these wonderful tidings to the other disciples, before the two summoned by Mary Magdalene arrived; of these the younger and more active, John, outran the older, Peter. But he only entered the outer chamber, from whence he could see the state in which the grave-clothes were lying; but before he entered the inner chamber, he awaited the arrival of his companion. Peter went in first, and afterwards John, who, as he states, not till then, believed that the body had been taken away, for, up to that time, the Apostles themselves had no thought or expectation of the resurrection (1). These two Apostles returned home, leaving Mary Magdalene, who probably wearied by her walk to the city and her return, had not come up with them till they had completed their search. The other women, meantime, had fled in haste, and in the silence of terror, through the hostile city; and until, later in the day, they found the Apostles assembled together, did not unburthen their hearts of this extraordinary secret. Mary Magdalene (2) was left alone; she had seen and heard nothing of the evangelic vision which had appeared to the others; but on looking down into the sepulchre, she saw the same vision which had appeared to the others, and was in her turn addressed by the angels; and it seems that her feelings were those of unmitigated sorrow. She stood near the sepulchre weeping. To her Jesus then first appeared. So little was she prepared for his presence, that she at first mistook him for the person who had the charge of the garden. Her language is that of grief, because unfriendly hands have removed the body, and carried it away to some unknown place. Nor was it till he again addressed her, that she recognised his familiar form and voice.

Arrival of
Peter and
John.

First ap-
pearance
of Jesus to
Mary Mag-
dalene.

Later ap-
pearance.

The second (3) appearance of Jesus was to the other party of women, as they returned to the city, and, perhaps, separated to find out the different Apostles, to whom, when assembled, they related the whole of their adventure. In the mean time a third appearance (4) had taken place to two disciples who had made an excursion to Emmaus, a village between seven and eight miles from

(1) John, xv. 8, 9.

(2) Mark, xvi. 9–11; John, xx. 11–18.

(3) Matt. xxviii. 9, 10.

(4) Mark, xvi. 12, 13.; Luke, xxiv. 13–32.

Jerusalem : a fourth to the Apostle Peter ; this apparition is not noticed by the Evangelists ; it rests on the authority of St. Paul (1). The intelligence of the women had been received with the utmost incredulity by the assembled Apostles. The arrival of the two disciples from Emmaus, with their more particular relation of his conversing with them ; his explaining the Scriptures ; his breaking bread with them ; made a deeper impression. Still mistrust seems to have predominated ; and when Jesus appeared in the chamber, the doors of which had been closed from fear lest their meeting should be interrupted by the hostile rulers, the first sensation was terror rather than joy. It was not till Jesus conversed with them, and permitted them to ascertain by actual touch the identity of his body, that they yielded to emotions of gladness. Jesus appeared a second time, eight days after (2), in the public assembly of the disciples, and condescended to remove the doubts of one Apostle, who had not been present at the former meeting, by permitting him to inspect and touch his wounds.

This incredulity of the Apostles, related with so much simplicity, is, on many accounts, most remarkable, considering the apparent distinctness with which Jesus appears to have predicted both his death and resurrection, and the rumour which put the Sanhedrin on their guard against any clandestine removal of the body. The key to this difficulty is to be sought in the opinions of the time. The notion of a resurrection was intimately connected with the coming of the Messiah, but that resurrection was of a character very different from the secret, the peaceful, the unimposing reappearance of Jesus after his death. It was an integral, an essential part of that splendid vision which represented the Messiah as summoning all the fathers of the chosen race from their graves to share in the glories of his kingdom (3). Even after the resurrection the bewildered Apostles inquire whether that kingdom, the only sovereignty of which they yet dreamed, was about to commence (4). The death of Jesus, notwithstanding his care to prepare their minds for that appalling event, took them by surprise : they seem to have been stunned and confounded. It had shaken their faith by its utter incongruity with their preconceived notions, rather than confirmed it by its accordance with his own predictions ; and in this perplexed and darkling state the resurrection came upon them not less strangely at issue with their conceptions of the manner in which the Messiah would return to the world. When Jesus had alluded with more or less prophetic distinctness to that event, their minds had,

Incredulity of the Apostles in its cause.

(1) It does not appear possible that Peter could be one of the disciples near Emmaus. It would harmonise the accounts if we could suppose that St. Paul (1 Cor. xv. 5.) originally dictated Κἀὶστω, which was changed for the more familiar name Κῆρτα.

• (2) Mark, xvi. 14—18 ; Luke, xxiv. 36—49. John, xx. 19—29.

(3) See ch. ii, p. 78.

(4) Acts, i. 6. Compare Luke, xxiv. 21.

no doubt, reverted to their rooted opinions on the subject, and moulded up the plain sense of his words with some vague and confused interpretation framed out of their own traditions; the latter so far predominating, that their memory retained scarcely a vestige of the simpler truth, until it was forcibly re-awakened by its complete fulfilment in the resurrection of their Lord.

Excepting among the immediate disciples, the intelligence of the resurrection remained, it is probable, a profound secret, or, at all events, little more than vague and feeble rumours would reach the ear of the Sanhedrin. For though Christ had taken the first step to re-organise his religion, by his solemn commission to the Apostles at his first appearance in their assembly, it was not till after the return to Galilee, more particularly during one interview near the Lake of Gennesareth, that he invested Peter, and with him the rest of the Apostles, with the pastoral charge over his new community. For, according to their custom, the Galilean Apostles had returned to their homes during the interval between the Passover and the Pentecost, and there, among the former scenes of his beneficent labours, on more than one occasion, the living Jesus had appeared, and conversed familiarly with them (1).

Return of
the Apostles
to
Galilee.

Apostles
in Judaea.

Ascension.

Forty days after the crucifixion, and ten before the Pentecost, the Apostles were again assembled at their usual place of resort, in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem, the village of Bethany. It was here, on the slope of the Mount of Olives, that, in the language of St. Luke, "he was parted from them;" "he was taken up, and a cloud received him out of their sight (2)."

During the interval between the Ascension and the day of Pentecost, the Apostles of Jesus regularly performed their devotions in the Temple, but they may have been lost and unobserved among the thousands who either returned to Jerusalem for the second great annual festival, or if from more remote parts, remained, as was customary, in the capital from the Passover to the Pentecost. The election of a new apostle to fill the mysterious number of twelve, a

(1) Matt. xxviii. 16—20.; John. xxi. 1—23. Mark, in his brief and summary account, omits the journey to Galilee. Luke (xxiv. 49.) seems to intimate the contrary, as if he had known nothing of this retreat. This verse, however, may be a kind of continuation of verse 47, and is not to be taken in this strict sense, so as positively to exclude an intermediate journey to Galilee.

(2) Neander has closed his life of Christ with some forcible observations on the Ascension, to which it has been objected that St. Luke alone, though in two places, Gosp. xxiv. 50, 51.; Acts, i. 9—11., mentions this most extraordinary event. "How could the resurrection of Christ have been to the disciples the groundwork of their belief in everlasting life, if it had been again followed by his death? With the death of Christ the faith, especially in his resurrection and reappearance, must again, of necessity, have sunk away. Christ would again have appeared to them an ordinary man, their belief in him

as the Messiah would have suffered a violent shock. How in this manner could that conviction of the exaltation of Christ have formed itself within them, which we find expressed in their writings with so much force and precision. Though the fact of his ascension, as visible to the senses, is witnessed expressly only by St. Luke, the language of St. John concerning his ascent to the Father, the declarations of all the apostles concerning his exaltation to heaven (see especially the strong expression of St. Mark, xvi. 19. H.M.), presuppose their conviction of his supernatural elevation from the earth, since the notion of his departure from this earthly life in the ordinary manner is thereby altogether excluded. Even if none of the apostolic writers had mentioned this visible and real fact, we might have safely inferred from all which they say of Christ, that in some form or other they presupposed a supernatural exaltation of Christ from this visible earthly world. Leben Jesu, p. 656

number hallowed to Jewish feeling as that of the tribes of their ancestors, shows that they now looked upon themselves again as a permanent body, united by a federal principle, and destined for some ulterior purpose ; and it is possible that they might look with eager hope to the feast of Pentecost, the celebration of the delivery of the law on Mount Sinai (1); the birthday as it were of the religious constitution of the Jews, as an epoch peculiarly suited for the reorganisation and reconstruction of the new kingdom of the Messiah.

Election
of a new
Apostle.

The Sanhedrin doubtless expected any thing rather than the revival of the religion of Jesus. The guards, who had fled from the sepulchre, had been bribed to counteract any rumour of the resurrection, by charging the disciples with the clandestine removal of the body. The city had been restored to peace, as if no extraordinary event had taken place. The Galileans, the followers of Jesus among the rest, had retired to their native province. In the popular estimation the claims of Jesus to the Messiahship were altogether extinguished by his death. The attempt to reinstate him who had been condemned by the Sanhedrin, and crucified by the Romans, in public reverence and belief, as the promised Redeemer, might have appeared a proceeding so desperate, as could not enter into the most enthusiastic mind. The character of the disciples of Jesus was as little calculated to awaken apprehension. The few richer or more influential persons who had been inclined to embrace his cause, even during his lifetime, had maintained their obnoxious opinions in secret. The ostensible leaders were men of low birth, humble occupations, deficient education, and—no unimportant objection in the mind of the Jews—Galileans. Never indeed was sect so completely centered in the person of its founder : the whole rested on his personal authority, emanated from his personal teaching ; and however it might be thought, that some of his sayings might be treasured in the minds of his blind and infatuated adherents ; however they might refuse to abandon the hope that he would appear again, as the Messiah ; all this delusion would gradually die away, from the want of any leader qualified to take up and maintain a cause so lost and hopeless. Great must have been their astonishment at the intelligence, that the religion of Jesus had reappeared, in a new, in a more attractive form ; that on the feast day which next followed their total dispersion, those humble, ignorant, and despised Galileans were making converts by thousands, at the very gates, even perhaps within the precincts of the Temple. The more visible circumstances of the miracle which took place on the day of Pentecost, the descent of the Holy Ghost, under the appearance of fiery tongues, in the private assembly of the Christians, might not reach

Reappear-
ance of
the reli-
gion of
Jesus.

(1) See the traditions on this subject in Meuschen N. L., a Talmude illustratum, p. 740

their ears ; but they could not long remain ignorant of this strange and alarming fact, that these uneducated men, apparently reorganised, and acting with the most fearless freedom, were familiarly conversing with, and inculcating the belief in the resurrection of Jesus, on strangers from every quarter of the world, in all their various languages, or dialects (1).

The Jews whose families had been long domiciliated in the different provinces of the Roman and the Parthian dominions, gradually lost, or had never learned, the vernacular tongue of Palestine ; they adopted the language of the surrounding people. The original sacred Hebrew was understood only by the learned. How far, on one side the Greek, on the other the Babylonian Chaldaic, which was nearly allied to the vernacular Aramaic, were admitted into the religious services of the synagogue, appears uncertain ; but the different synagogues in Jerusalem were appropriated to the different races of Jews. Those from Alexandria, from Cyrene, the Libertines, descended from freed slaves at Rome, perhaps therefore speaking Latin, the Cilicians and Asiatics, had their separate places of assembly (2) : so, probably, those who came from more remote quarters, where Greek, the universal medium of communication in great part of the Roman empire, was less known, as in Arabia, Mesopotamia, and beyond the Euphrates.

Disciples
near the
Temple.
Gift of
tongues.

The scene of this extraordinary incident must have been some place of general resort ; yet, scarcely within the Temple, where, though there were many chambers set apart for instruction in the law and other devotional purposes, the Apostles were not likely to have obtained admittance to one of these, or to have been permitted to carry on their teaching without interruption. If conjecture might be hazarded, we should venture to place their house of assembly in one of the streets leading to the Temple ; that, perhaps, which, descending the slope of the hill, led to the Mount of Olives, and to the village of Bethany. The time, the third hour, nine in the morning, was that of public prayer in the Temple ; multitudes, therefore, would throng all the avenues to the Temple, and would be arrested on their way by the extraordinary sight of Peter and his colleagues thus addressing the various classes in their different dialects ; asserting openly the resurrection of Jesus ; arraigning the injustice of his judicial murder ; and re-establishing his claim to be received as the Messiah.

These submissive, timid, and scattered followers of Jesus thus burst upon the public attention, suddenly invested with courage, endowed with commanding eloquence, in the very scene of their master's cruel apprehension and execution, asserting his Messiah-

(1) Kuinoel (in loc. Act.) gives a lucid view of the various rationalist and anti-rationalist interpretations of this miracle.

(2) Acts. vi.

ship, in a form as irreconcilable with their own preconceived notions, as with those of the rest of the people; arraigning the rulers, and, by implication, if not as yet in distinct words, the whole nation, of the most heinous act of impiety, as well as barbarity, the rejection of the Messiah; proclaiming the resurrection, and defying investigation. The whole speech of Peter clashed with the strongest prejudices of those who had so short a time before given such fearful evidence of their animosity and remorselessness. It proclaimed that "the last days," the days of the Messiah, the days of prophecy and wonder, had already begun. It placed the Being whom but forty days before they had seen helplessly expiring upon the cross, far above the pride almost the idol of the nation, King David. The ashes of the king had long reposed in the tomb, which was before their eyes; but the tomb could not confine Jesus; death had no power over his remains. Nor was his resurrection all: the crucified Jesus was now "on the right hand of God:" he had assumed that last, the highest distinction of the Messiah—the superhuman majesty; that intimate relation with the Deity, which, however vaguely and indistinctly shadowed out in the Jewish notion of the Messiah, was as it were the crowning glory, the ultimate height to which the devout hopes of the most strongly excited of the Jews followed up the promised Redeemer: "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both *Lord* and Christ (1)."

Speech of
Peter.

Three thousand declared converts were the result of this first appeal to the Jewish multitude: the religion thus reappeared in a form new, complete, and more decidedly hostile to the prevailing creed and dominant sentiments of the nation. From this time the Christian community assumed its separate and organised existence, united by the federal rite of baptism; and the popular mind was deeply impressed by the preternatural powers exercised by its leading followers. Many of the converts threw their property, or part of it, into a common stock; now become necessary, as the teachers of Christianity had to take up their permanent residence in Jerusalem, at a distance from their homes and the scenes of their humble labours. The religion spread of course, with the greatest rapidity among the lower orders. Assistance in their wants, and protection against the hostility, or at least the coldness and estrangement, of the powerful and opulent, were necessary to hold together the young society. Such was the general ardour, that many did not hesitate to sell their landed property, the tenure of which, however loosened by time, and by the successive changes in the political state of the country, probably, at this period of the Messiah's expected coming, assumed a new value. This therefore,

(1) Acts, ii. 36.

Common fund not community of goods. was no easy triumph over Jewish feeling. Yet nothing like an Essenian community of goods ever appears to have prevailed in the Christian community; such a system, however favourable to the maintenance of certain usages or opinions within a narrow sphere, would have been fatal to the aggressive and comprehensive spirit of Christianity, the vital and conservative principle of a sect, it was inconsistent with an universal religion and we cannot but admire the wisdom which avoided a precedent so attractive, as conducing to the immediate prosperity, yet so dangerous to the ultimate progress of the religion (1).

Conduct of the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin at first stood aloof; whether from awe, or miscalculating contempt, or, it is possible, from internal dissension. It was not till they were assailed, as it were in the heart of their own territory; not till the miracle of healing the lame man near the Beautiful gate of the Temple (this gate opened into the inner court of the Temple, and, from the richness of its architecture, had received that name), and the public proclamation of the resurrection, in the midst of the assembled worshippers, in the second recorded speech of Peter, had secured five thousand converts; that at length the authorities found it necessary to interfere, and to arrest, if possible, the rapid progress of the faith. The second speech of the Apostle (2) was in a somewhat more calm and conciliating tone than the former: it dwelt less on the crime of the crucifixion, than on the advantages of belief in Jesus as the Messiah. It did not shrink, indeed, from reasserting the guilt of the death of the Just One; yet it palliated the ignorance through which the people, and even the rulers, had rejected Jesus, and stained the city with his blood. It called upon them to repent of this national crime; and, as if even yet Peter himself was not disencumbered of that Jewish notion, it seemed to intimate the possibility of an immediate reappearance of Christ (3), to fulfil to the Jewish people all that they hoped from this greater than Moses, this accomplisher of the sublime promise made to their Father Abraham. To the Sanhedrin, the speech was, no doubt, but vaguely reported; but any speech delivered by such men, in such a place, and on such a subject, demanded their interference. Obtaining the assistance of the commander of the Roman guard, mounted, as has been said, in the gallery leading to the Antonia, they seized and imprisoned the Apostles. The next morning they were brought up for examination. The boldness of the Apostles, who asserted their

(1) Mosheim appears to me to have proved this point conclusively. At a later period, every exhortation to almsgiving, and every sentence which alludes to distinctions of rich and poor in the Christian community, is decisive against the community of goods.

(2) Acts. iii. 12 - 26.

(3) V. 20, 21: "The time of refreshing, when

he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: whom the heavens must receive until the times of restitution of all things." This restitution of all things, in the common Jewish belief, was to be almost simultaneous with or to follow very closely the appearance of the Messiah.

doctrines with calm resolution, avowed and enforced their belief in the resurrection and Messiahship of the crucified Jesus, as well as the presence of the man who had been healed, perplexed the council. After a private conference, they determined to try the effect of severe threatenings, and authoritatively commanded them to desist from disseminating their obnoxious opinions. The Apostles answered by an appeal to a higher power—"Whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard (1)."

A remarkable revolution had taken place, either in the internal politics of the Sanhedrin, or in their prevailing sentiments towards Christianity. Up to the death of Jesus, the Pharisees were his chief opponents; against their authority he seemed chiefly to direct his rebukes; and, by their jealous animosity, he was watched, criminated, and at length put to death. Now in their turn, the Sadducees (2) take the lead; either because the doctrine of the resurrection struck more directly at the root of their system, or, otherwise, because their influence had gained a temporary ascendancy in the great council. But this predominance of the unpopular Sadducean party, on the throne of the High Priest, and in the council, if it increased their danger from the well-known severity with which that faction administered the law; on the other hand, it powerfully contributed to that reaction of popular favour, which again overawed the hostile Sanhedrin (3). This triumph over their adversaries; this resolute determination to maintain their cause at all hazards (sanctioned, as it seemed, by the manifest approval of the Almighty); the rapid increase in their possessions, which enabled them to protect all the poorer classes who joined their ranks; the awful death of Ananias and Sapphira (4), into the circumstances of which their enemies ventured no inquiry; the miracles of a gentler and more beneficent character, which they performed in public; the concourse from the neighbourhood of Jerusalem to partake in their powers of healing, and to hear their doctrines; the manifest superiority, in short, which Christianity was gaining over the established Judaism, determined the Sanhedrin, after a short time, to make another effort to suppress their growing power. The Apostles were seized, and cast ignominiously into the common prison. In the morning they were sought in vain: the doors were found closed, but the prisoners had disappeared;

Sadducees
predominant in the
Sanhedrin.

(1) Acts, iv. 19, 20.

(2) Acts, iv. 1. Annas is mentioned as the high priest, and then Caiaphas, who it appears, from the Gospels, and from Josephus (Ant. xviii. 2. 2., 4. 3.), was not deposed till a later period. The interpretation of Krebs. (Observations in N. T., c Josepho, p. 177.), appears to me the best. Annas was the second high priest, or deputy; but is named first, as the head of the family

in which the high priesthood was vested, being father-in-law to Caiaphas. The rest were the assessors of the high priest.

• (3) "They let them go, finding nothing how they might punish them *because of the people*: for all men glorified God for that which was done." Acts, iv. 21.

(4) Acts, v.

and the dismayed Sanhedrin received intelligence that they had taken up their customary station in the Temple. Even the Roman officer, despatched to secure their persons, found it necessary to act with caution and gentleness; for the multitude were ready to undertake their defence, even against the armed soldiery; and stones were always at hand in the neighbourhood or precincts of the Temple, for any tumultuary resistance. The Apostles, however, peaceably obeyed the citation of the Sanhedrin; but the language of Peter was now even more bold and resolute than before: he openly proclaimed, in the face of the astonished council, the crucified Jesus to be the Prince and the Saviour, and asserted the inspiration of himself and his companions by the Spirit of God (1).

Apostles
before the
Sanhe-
drin.

The Sadducaic faction were wrought to the highest pitch of frenzy; they were eager to press the capital charge. But the Pharisaic party endeavoured, not without success, to mitigate the sentence. The perpetual rivalry of the two sects, and the general leniency of the Pharisaic administration of the law, may have concurred, with the moderation and judgment of the individual, to induce Gamaliel to interpose the weight of his own personal authority and that of his party. Gamaliel does not appear, himself, to have been inclined to Christianity: he was most likely the same who is distinguished in Jewish tradition as president of the Sanhedrin, (though the High Priest, being now present, would take the chief place,) and as the master under whom St. Paul had studied the Law. The speech of Gamaliel, with singular address, confounded the new sect with those of two adventurers, Judas the Galilean, and Theudas, whose insurrections had excited great expectation, but gradually died away. With these, affairs were left to take their course; against their pretensions God had decided by their failure: leave, then, to the same unerring Judge the present decision.

Gamaliel.

To this temporising policy the majority of the council assented; part probably considering, that either the sect would, after all, die away, without establishing any permanent influence, or, like some of those parties mentioned by Gamaliel, run into wild excess, and so provoke the Roman government to suppress them by force; others from mere party spirit, to counteract the power of the opposite faction; some from more humane principles and kindlier motives; others from perplexity; some, perhaps, from awe, which, though it had not yet led to belief, had led to hesitation; some from sincere piety; as, in fact, expecting that an event of such importance would be decided by some manifest interposition, or overruling influence at least, of the Almighty. The majority were anxious, from these different motives, to escape the perilous re-

sponsibility of decision. The less violent course was therefore followed; after the apostles had suffered the milder punishment of scourging; a punishment inflicted with great frequency among the Jews, yet ignominious to the sufferer; the persecution, for the present, ceased: the Apostles again appeared in public; they attended in the Temple; but how long this period of security lasted, from the uncertain chronology of the early Christian history (1), it is impossible to decide. Yet, as the jealousies which appear to have arisen in the infant community, would require some time to mature and grow to head, we should interpose two or three years between this collision with the authorities and the next which first embroiled the soil of Jerusalem with the blood of a Christian martyr. Nor would the peaceful policy adopted through the authority of Gamaliel have had a fair trial in a shorter period of time; it would scarcely have been overborne at once and immediately by the more violent party.

The first converts to Christianity were Jews (2), but of two distinct classes:—1, the natives of Palestine, who spoke the Syrian dialect, and among whom perhaps were included the Jews from the East; 2, the Western Jews, who having been settled in the different provinces of the Roman empire, generally spoke Greek. This class may likewise have comprehended proselytes to Judaism. Jealousies arose between these two parties. The Greeks complained that the distribution of the general charitable fund was conducted with partiality, that their “widows were neglected.” The dispute led to the establishment of a new order in the community. The Apostles withdrew from the laborious, it might be the invidious, office; and seven disciples, from whose names we may conjecture that they were chosen from the Grecian party, were invested by a solemn ceremony, the imposition of hands, as deacons or ministers, with the superintendence of the general funds.

Institution
of Deacons,

It was in the synagogues of the foreign, the African and Asiatic Jews, that the success of Stephen, one of these deacons, excited the most violent hostility. The indignant people found that not even the priesthood was a security against this spreading apos-

A. D. 34.

(1) There is no certain date in the Acts of the Apostles, except that of the death of Herod, A.D. 44., even if that is certain. Nothing can be more easy than to array against each other the names of the most learned authorities, who from the earliest days have laboured to build a durable edifice out of the insufficient materials in their power. Perhaps from Jerom to Dr. Burton and Mr. Greswell, no two systems agree. The passage in St. Paul, Gal. ii. 1., which might be expected to throw light on this difficult subject, involves it in still greater intricacy. In the first place, the reading, fourteen years, as Grotius and many others have shown, not without MS. authority, is by no means certain. Then, from whence is this period to be calculated?—from

the conversion, with Pearson, and many modern writers? or from the first visit of St. Paul to Jerusalem, with others? All is doubtful, contested, conjectural. The only plan, therefore, is to adopt, and uniformly adhere to, some one system. In fact the cardinal point of the whole calculation, the year of our Saviour's death, being as uncertain as the rest, we shall state, that we assume that to have been A. D. 34. From thence we shall proceed to affix our dates according to our own view, without involving our readers in the inextricable labyrinth to which we are convinced that there is no certain or satisfactory clue. If we notice any arguments, they will be chiefly of an historical nature.

(2) Acts, vi.

tasy : many of that order enrolled themselves among the disciples of Christ (1). Whether the execution of this first martyr to Christianity was a legal or tumultuary proceeding,—whether it was a solemn act of the Sanhedrin, the supreme judicial as well as civil tribunal of the nation, or an outbreak of popular indignation and resentment,—the preliminary steps at least, appear to have been conducted with regularity. He was formally arraigned before the Sanhedrin, of blasphemy, as asserting the future destruction of the Temple, and the abrogation of the Law. This accusation, although the witnesses are said to have been false and suborned, seems to intimate, that in those Hellenistic congregations Christianity had already assumed a bolder and more independent tone ; that it had thrown aside some of the peculiar character which adhered to it in the other communities ; that it already aspired to be an universal, not a national religion ; and one destined to survive the local worship in Jerusalem, and the abolition of the Mosaic institutes (2). Whether inflamed by these popular topics of accusation, which struck at the vital principle of their religious influence, or again taking alarm at the progress of Christianity, the Pharisaic party, which we found after the resurrection had lost their supremacy in the council, appear, from the active concurrence of Saul, and from the re-awakened hostility of the multitude, over whom the Sadducees had no commanding influence, to have re-united themselves to the more violent enemies of the faith. The defence of Stephen recapitulated in bold language the chief points of the national history, the privileges and the crimes of the race of Israel, which gradually led to this final consummation of their impiety and guilt, the rejection of the Messiah, the murder of the Just One. It is evidently incomplete ; it was interrupted by the fury of his opponents, who took fire at his arraigning them, not merely of the death of Jesus, but of this perpetual violation of the Law ; “ who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it (3).” This charge struck directly at the Pharisaic party ; the populace ever under their control, either abandoned the Christians to their fate, or joined in the hasty and ruthless vengeance. The murmurs, the gestures of the indignant Sanhedrin, and of others, perhaps, who witnessed the trial, betrayed their impatience and indignation : they gnashed their teeth ; and Stephen breaking off, or unable to pursue his continuous discourse, in a kind of prophetic ecstacy declared that at that instant he beheld the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. Whether legal or tumultuary, the execution of Stephen was conducted with so much attention to form,

(1) Acts, vi. 7.

(2) Stephen has been called by some modern writers the forerunner of St. Paul. See Neander ; *Geschichte der Pflanzung der Christlichen Kirche*,

p. 41.; a work which I had not the advantage of consulting, when this part of the present volume was written.

(3) Acts, vii. 53.

that he was first carried beyond the walls of the city (1); the witnesses, whose office it was to cast the first stone (2), put off their clothes, and perhaps observed the other forms peculiar to this mode of execution. He died as a true follower of Jesus, praying the divine mercy upon his barbarous persecutors; but neither the sight of his sufferings, nor the beauty of his dying words, allayed the excitement which had now united the conflicting parties of the Jews in their common league against Christianity. Yet the mere profession of Christianity did not necessarily involve any capital charge; or if it did, the Jews wanted power to carry the sentence of death into execution on a general scale (3). Though then they had either deliberately ventured, or yielded to a violent impulse of fury, on this occasion, their vengeance in other cases was confined to those subordinate punishments which were left under their jurisdiction; —imprisonment; public scourging in the synagogue; and that which, of course, began to lose its terrors as soon as the Christians formed separate and independent communities, the once awful Excommunication.

Death of
the proto-
martyr.
A. D. 34.

The martyrdom of Stephen led to the most important results, not merely as first revealing that great lesson which mankind has been so slow to learn, that religious persecution which stops short of extermination, always advances the cause which it endeavours to repress. It showed that Christian faith was stronger than death, the last resort of human cruelty. Thenceforth its triumph was secure. For every death, courageously, calmly, cheerfully endured, where it appalled one dastard into apostasy, made, or prepared the minds of a hundred proselytes. To the Jew, ready himself to lay down his life in defence of his Temple, this self-devotion, though an undeniable test of sincerity in the belief of facts of recent occurrence, was less extraordinary; to the heathen it showed a determined assurance of immortality, not less new, as an active and generally principle, than attractive and ennobling.

The more immediate consequences of the persecution were no less favourable to the progress of Christianity. The Christians were driven out of Jerusalem, where the Apostles alone remained firm at their posts. Scattered through the whole region, if not beyond the precincts of Palestine, they bore with them the seed of the religion. The most important progress was made in Samaria: but the extent of their success in this region, and the opposition they encountered

(1) In one instance, it may be remembered, the multitude was so excited as to attempt to stone our Saviour within the precincts of the Temple.

(2) Deut. xvii. 7.

(3) Michaelis, followed by Eichhorn, has argued, with considerable plausibility, that these violent measures would scarcely have been ventured by the Jews under the rigorous administration of Pilate. Vitellius, on the other hand, by whom Pilate was sent in disgrace to Rome,

A. D. 36, visited Jerusalem A. D. 37, was received with great honours, and seems to have treated the Jewish authorities with the utmost respect. On these grounds he places this persecution as late as the year 37. Yet the government of Pilate appears to have been capriciously, rather than systematically severe. The immediate occasion of his recall, was his tyrannical conduct to the Samaritans. It may have been his policy, while his administration was drawing to a close, to court the ruling authorities of the Jews.

among this people, deeply tinged with Oriental opinion, will be related in another part of this work. Philip, one of the most active of the deacons, made another convert of rank and importance, an officer (1) who held the highest station and influence with Candace, the queen of the Ethiopians. The name of Candace (2) was the hereditary appellation of the queens of Meroe, as Pharaoh of the older, and Ptolemy of the later Egyptian kings. The Jews had spread in great numbers to that region; and the return of a person of such influence, a declared convert to the new religion, can scarcely have been without consequences, of which, unhappily, we have no record.

Paul of
Tarsus.

But far the most important result of the death of Stephen, was its connection with the conversion of St. Paul. To propagate Christianity in the enlightened West, where its most extensive, at least, most permanent, conquests were to be made; to emancipate it from the trammels of Judaism; a man was wanting of larger and more comprehensive views, of higher education, and more liberal accomplishments. Such an instrument for its momentous scheme of benevolence to the human race, Divine Providence found in Saul of Tarsus. Born in the Grecian and commercial town of Tarsus, where he had acquired no inconsiderable acquaintance with Grecian letters and philosophy; but brought up in the most celebrated school of Pharisaic learning, that of Gamaliel, for which purpose he had probably resided long in Jerusalem; having inherited, probably from the domiciliation of his family in Tarsus (3), the valuable privilege of Roman citizenship; yet with his Judaism in no degree weakened by his Grecian culture, — Saul stood as it were on the confines of both regions, qualified beyond all men to develop a system which should unite Jew and Gentile under one more harmonious and comprehensive faith. The zeal with which Saul urged on the subsequent persecution, showed that the death of Stephen had made, as might have been expected, no influential impression upon a mind so capable, unless blinded by zeal, of appreciating its moral sublimity. The commission from the Sanhedrin, to bring in safe custody to Jerusalem such of the Jews of Damascus as had embraced Christianity, implies their unabated reliance on his fidelity. The national confidence which invested him in this important office, the unhesitating readiness with which he appears to have assumed it, in a man of his apparently severe integrity, and unshaken sense of duty, imply, in all ordinary human estimation,

(1) The word "Eunuch" may be here used in its primary sense (eubicularius), without any allusion to its later meaning; as, according to the strict rites of the law, a Jewish eunuch was disqualified from appearing at the public assemblies.

(2) Regnare feminam Candace, quod nomen multis jam annis ad reginas transit. Plin. vi. 29. Conf. Strabo, xvii. p. 1175. Dio. Cass. lvi.

(3) Compare Strabo's account of Tarsus. The natives of this city were remarkably addicted to philosophical studies; but in general travelled and settled in foreign countries: Οὐδ' αὐτοὶ οὗτοι μίγουσιν αὐτόθι, ἀλλὰ καὶ περιεῖνται ἐκδηροῦντες, καὶ τελειαθίνας ἐνιστεῦουσιν ἡδέως, κατέρχοντα δ' ὁμιλεῖ. — Strabo, lib. xiv. p. 673.

that he had in no degree relaxed from that zeal which induced him to witness the execution of Stephen, if not with stern satisfaction, yet without commiseration. Even then, if the mind of Paul was in any degree prepared, by the noble manner in which Stephen had endured death, to yield to the miraculous interposition which occurred on the road to Damascus, nothing less than some occurrence of the most extraordinary and unprecedented character could have arrested so suddenly, and diverted so completely from its settled purpose, a mind of so much strength, and however of vivid imagination, to all appearance very superior to popular superstition. Saul set forth from Jerusalem, according to the narrative of the Acts, with his mind wrought up to the most violent animosity against these apostates from the faith of their ancestors (1). He set forth, thus manifestly inveterate in his prejudices, unshaken in his ardent attachment to the religion of Moses, the immutability and perpetuity of which he considered it treasonable and impious to question, with an austere and indignant sense of duty, fully authorised by the direct testimony of the Law, to exterminate all renegades from the severest Judaism. The ruling Jews must have heard with the utmost amazement, that the persecuting zealot who had voluntarily demanded the commission of the High Priest to repress the growing sect of the Christians, had arrived at Damascus, blinded for a time, humbled, and that his first step had been openly to join himself to that party which he had threatened to exterminate.

The Christians, far from welcoming so distinguished a proselyte, looked on him at first with natural mistrust and suspicion. And although at Damascus this jealousy was speedily allayed by the interposition of Ananias, a leading Christian, to whom his conversion had been revealed by a vision, at Jerusalem his former hostile violence had made so deep an impression, that, three years after his conversion, even the Apostles stood aloof, and with reluctance admitted a proselyte of such importance, yet whose conversion to them still appeared so highly improbable.

No event in Christian history, from this improbability, as well as its influence on the progress of the religion, would so demand, if the expression may be used, the divine intervention as the conversion of St. Paul. Paul was essentially necessary to the development of the Christian scheme. Neither the self-suggested workings of the imagination, even if coincident with some extraordinary but fortuitous atmospheric phenomena; nor any worldly notion of aggrandisement, as the head of a new and powerful sect; nor that more noble ambition, which might anticipate the moral and social blessings of Christianity, and, once conceived, would strike resolutely into the scheme for their advancement,—furnish even a plau-

(1) "Breathing threatenings and slaughter, against the disciples of the Lord." Acts ix. 1—22

sible theory for the total change of such a man, at such a time, and under such circumstances. The minute investigation of this much agitated question could scarcely be in its place in the present work. But to doubt, in whatever manner it took place, the divine mission of Paul, would be to discard all providential interposition in the design and propagation of Christianity.

Unquestionably it is remarkable how little encouragement Paul seems at first to have received from the party, to join which he had sacrificed all his popularity with his countrymen, the favour of the supreme magistracy, and a charge, if of severe and cruel, yet of an important character; all, indeed, which hitherto appeared the ruling objects of his life. Instead of assuming at once, as his abilities and character might seem to command, a distinguished place in the new community into which he had been received; instead of being hailed, as, renegades from the opposite faction usually are, by a weak and persecuted party, his early course is lost in obscurity. He passes several years in exile, as it were, from both parties; he emerges by slow degrees into eminence, and hardly wins his way into the reluctant confidence of the Christians; who, however they might at first be startled by the improbability of the fact, yet felt such reliance in the power of their Lord and Redeemer, as scarcely we should have conceived to be affected by lasting wonder at the conversion of any upbeliever.

Paul in
Arabia.

Part of the three years which elapsed between the conversion of Paul and his first visit to Jerusalem, were passed in Arabia (1). The cause of this retirement into a foreign region, and the part of the extensive country, which was then called Arabia, in which he resided, are altogether unknown. It is possible, indeed, that he may have sought refuge from the Jews of Damascus, or employed himself in the conversion of the Jews who were scattered in great numbers in every part of Arabia. The frontiers of the Arabian king bordered closely on the territory of Damascus, and Paul may have retired but a short distance from that city. During this interval, Arelas, whose hostile intentions against Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, Vitellius, the prefect of Syria, had made preparations to repress, had the boldness to invade the Syrian prefecture, and to seize the important city of Damascus. It is difficult to conceive this act of aggression to have been hazarded unless at some period of public confusion, such as took place at the death of Tiberius. According to Josephus, Vitellius, who had collected a great force to invest Petra, the capital of the Arabian king, on the first tidings of that event, instantly suspended his operations, and withdrew his troops into their winter quarters. At all events, at the close of these three

(1) The time of St. Paul's residence in Arabia is generally assumed to have been one whole year, and part of the preceding and the follow-

ing. The expression in the Epist. to the Galatians, (i. 17, 18,) appears to me by no means to require this arrangement.

years Damascus was in the power of Aretas. The Jews, who probably were under the authority of an ethnarch of their own people, obtained sufficient influence with the Arabian governor to carry into effect their designs against the life of Paul (1). His sudden apostasy from their cause, his extraordinary powers, his ardent zeal, his unexampled success, had wrought their animosity to this deadly height; and Paul was with difficulty withdrawn from their fury by being let down from the walls in a basket, the gates being carefully guarded by the command of the Arabian governor.

Among the most distinguished of the first converts was Barnabás, a native of Cyprus, who had contributed largely from his possessions in that island to the common fund; and whose commanding character and abilities gave him great influence. When Paul, after his escape from Damascus, arrived at Jerusalem, so imperfect appears to have been the correspondence between the more remote members of the Christian community, (possibly from Damascus and its neighbourhood having been the seat of war, or because Paul had past considerable part of the three years in almost total seclusion), at all events, such was the obscurity of the whole transaction, that no certain intelligence of so extraordinary an event as his conversion had reached the apostolic body, or rather Peter and James, the only Apostles then resident in Jerusalem (2). Barnabas alone espoused his cause, removed the timid suspicions of the Apostles, and Paul was admitted into the reluctant Christian community. As peculiarly skilled in the Greek language, his exertions to advance Christianity were particularly addressed to those of the Jews to whom Greek was vernacular. But a new conspiracy again endangering his life, he was carried away by the care of his friends to Cæsarea, and thence proceeded to his native city of Tarsus (3).

About this time a more urgent and immediate danger than the progress of Christianity occupied the mind of the Jewish people. The very existence of their religion was threatened, for the frantic Caligula had issued orders to place his statue in the Temple at Jerusalem. The historian of the Jews must relate the negotiations, the petitions, the artful and humane delays interposed by the prefect Petronius, and all the incidents which show how deeply and universally the nation was absorbed by this appalling subject (4). It caused, no doubt, as it were a diversion in favour of the Christians; and the temporary peace enjoyed by the churches is attributed, with great probability, rather to the fears of the Jews for their own religious independence, than to the relaxation of their hostility against the Christians (5).

Persecution of the Jews by Caligula.

(1) Acts, ix. 23

(2) Acts, ix. 20.

(3) Acts, ix. 30

(4) Joseph., Ant. xviii. 8 History of the Jews
ii. 178. 186.

(5) Benson (Hist. of first planting of Christianity) and Lardner take this view.

A. D.
39-41.

Death of
James.

A. D. 44.

Death of
Herod.

This peace was undisturbed for about three years (1). The Apostles pursued their office of disseminating the Gospel in every part of Judæa, until Herod Agrippa took possession of the hereditary dominions, which had been partly granted by the favour of Caligula, and were secured by the gratitude of Claudius. Herod Agrippa affected the splendour of his grandfather, the first Herod; but, unlike him, he attempted to ingratiate himself with his subjects by the strictest profession of Judaism (2). His power appears to have been as despotic as that of his ancestor; and, at the instigation, no doubt, of the leading Jews, he determined to take vigorous measures for the suppression of Christianity. James, the brother of St. John, was the first victim. He appears to have been summarily put to death by the military mandate of the king, without any process of the Jewish law (3). The Jews rejoiced, no doubt, that the uncontrolled power of life and death was again restored to one who assumed the character of a national king. They were no longer restrained by the caprice, the justice, or the humanity of a Roman prefect, who might treat their intolerance with contempt or displeasure; and they were encouraged in the hope, that at the same great Festival, during which some years before they had extorted the death of Jesus from the reluctant Pilate, their new king would more readily lend himself to their revenge against his most active and powerful follower. Peter was cast into prison, perhaps with the intention of putting him to death before the departure of Herod from the capital. He was delivered from his bondage by supernatural intervention (4). If the author of the Acts has preserved the order of time, two other of the most important adherents of Christianity ran considerable danger. The famine, predicted by Agabus at Antioch, commenced in Judæa, in the fourth year of Claudius, the last of Herod Agrippa. If, then, Barnabas and Paul proceeded to Jerusalem on their charitable mission to bear the contributions of the Christians in Antioch to their poorer brethren in Judæa (5), they must have arrived there during the height of the persecution. Either they remained in concealment, or the extraordinary circumstances of the escape of Peter from prison so confounded the king and his advisers, notwithstanding their attempt to prove the connivance of the guards, to which the lives of the miserable men were sacrificed, that for a time, the violence of the persecution was suspended, and those who would inevitably have been its next victims, obtained, as it were, a temporary respite.

The death of Herod, during the same year, delivered the Christians from their determined enemy. In its terrific and repulsive

(1) Acts, ix. 31. From 39 to 41, the year of Caligula's death.

(2) Hist. of Jews, ii. 192. 196

(3) Blasphemy was the only crime of which he could be accused, and stoning was the ordi-

nary mode of execution for that offence. James was cut off by the sword.

(4) Acts, xii. 1—23.

(5) Acts, xi. 30.

circumstances they could not but behold the hand of their protecting God. In this respect alone differ the Jewish and the Christian historian, Josephus and the writer of the Acts. In the appalling suddenness of his seizure, in the midst of his splendour and the impious adulations of his court, and in the loathsome nature of the disease, their accounts fully coincide.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTIANITY AND JUDAISM.

CHRISTIANITY had now made rapid and extensive progress throughout the Jewish world. The death and resurrection of Jesus; the rise of a new religious community, which proclaimed the Son of Mary to be the Messiah, taking place on a scene so public as the metropolis, and at the period of the general concourse of the nation, must have been rumoured, more or less obscurely, in the most remote parts of the Roman Empire, and eastward as far as the extreme settlements of the Jews. If the religion may not have been actually embraced by any of those pilgrims from the more distant provinces, who happened to be present during the great festivals, yet its seeds may have been already widely scattered. The dispersion of the community during the persecution after the death of Stephen, carried many zealous and ardent converts into the adjacent regions of Syria and the island of Cyprus. It had obtained a permanent establishment at Antioch, where the community first received the distinctive appellation of Christians.

Progress
of Christianity

Christianity however, as yet, was but an expanded Judaism; it was preached by Jews; it was addressed to Jews. It was limited, national, exclusive. The race of Israel gradually recognising in Jesus of Nazareth the promised Messiah; superinducing, as it were, the exquisite purity of Evangelic morality upon the strict performance of the moral law; redeemed from the sins of their fathers and from their own by Christ; assured of the resurrection to eternal life; the children of Abraham were still to stand alone and separate from the rest of mankind, sole possessors of the divine favour, sole inheritors of God's everlasting promises. There can be no doubt that they still looked for the speedy, if not the immediate, consummation of all things; the Messiah had as yet performed but part of his office; he was to come again, at no distant period, to accomplish all which was wanting to the established belief in his mission. His visible, his worldly kingdom was to commence; he had passed his ordeal of trial, of suffering, and of sacrifice; the same age, and the

gradual
enlarge-
ment of
the views
of the
Apostles.

same people were to behold him in his triumph, in his glory, and even, some self-deemed and self-named Christians would not hesitate to aver, in his revenge. At the head of his elect of Israel, he was to assume his dominion; and if his dominion was to be founded upon a still more rigid principle of exclusion than that of one favoured race, it entered not into the most remote expectation, that it could be formed on a wider plan, unless, perhaps, in favour of the few who should previously have acknowledged the divine legislation of Moses, and sued for and obtained admission among the hereditary descendants of Abraham. Nothing is more remarkable than to see the horizon of the Apostles gradually receding, and instead of resting on the borders of the Holy Land, comprehending at length the whole world; barrier after barrier falling down before the superior wisdom which was infused into their minds; first the proselytes of the gate, the foreign conformists to Judaism, and ere long the Gentiles themselves admitted within the pale; until Christianity stood forth, demanded the homage, and promised its rewards to the faith of the whole human race; proclaimed itself in language which the world had as yet never heard, the one, true, universal religion.

Christi-
anity, an
universal
religion.

As an universal religion, aspiring to the complete moral conquest of the world, Christianity had to encounter three antagonists. Judaism, Paganism, and Orientalism. It is our design successively to exhibit the conflict with these opposing forces, its final triumph not without detriment to its own native purity and its divine simplicity, from the interworking of the yet unsubdued elements of the former systems into the Christian mind; until each, at successive periods, and in different parts of the world, formed a modification of Christianity equally removed from its unmingled and unsullied original: the Judæo-Christianity of Palestine, of which the Ebionites appear to have been the last representatives; the Platonic Christianity of Alexandria, as, at least at this early period, the new religion could coalesce only with the sublimer and more philosophical principles of Paganism; and, lastly, the Gnostic Christianity of the East.

External
conflict of
Christi-
anity with
Judaism;

and in-
ternal.

With Judaism Christianity had to maintain a double conflict: one external, with the Judaism of the Temple, the Synagogue, the Sanhedrin; a contest of authority on one side, and the irrepressible spirit of moral and religious liberty on the other; of fierce intolerance against the stubborn endurance of conscientious faith; of relentless persecution against the calm and death-despising, or often death-seeking, heroism of martyrdom: the other, more dangerous and destructive, the Judaism of the infant Church; the old prejudices and opinions, which even Christianity could not altogether extirpate or correct in the earlier Jewish proselytes; the perpetual tendency to contract again the expanding circle; the enslavement

of Christianity to the provisions of the Mosaic law, and the spirit of the antiquated religion of Palestine. Until the first steps were taken to throw open the new religion to mankind at large; until Christianity, it may be said without disparagement, from a Jewish sect assumed the dignity of an independant religion, even the external animosity of Judaism had not reached its height. But the successive admission of the proselytes of the gate, and at length of the idolatrous Gentiles, into an equal participation in the privileges of the faith, showed that the breach was altogether irreparable. From that period the two systems stood in direct and irreconcilable opposition. To the eye of the Jew the Christian became, from a rebellious and heretical son, an irreclaimable apostate; and to the Christian the temporary designation of Jesus as the Messiah of the Jews, was merged in the more sublime title, the Redeemer of the world.

The same measures rendered the internal conflict with the lingering Judaism within the Church more violent and desperate. Its dying struggles, as it were, to maintain its ground, rent, for some time, the infant community with civil divisions. But the predominant influx of Gentile converts gradually obtained the ascendancy; Judaism slowly died out in the great body of the Church, and the Judæo-Christian sects in the East languished, and at length expired in obscurity.

Divine Providence had armed the religion of Christ with new powers adapted to the change in its situation and design, both for resistance against the more violent animosity, which was exasperated by its growing success, and for aggression upon the ignorance, the vice, and the misery, which it was to enlighten, to purify, or to mitigate. Independent of the supernatural powers occasionally displayed by the Apostles, the accession of two men so highly gifted with natural abilities, as well as with all the peculiar powers conferred on the first Apostles of Christianity, the enrolment of Barnabas and Paul in the Apostolic body, showed that for the comprehensive system about to be developed instruments were wanting of a different character from the humble and un instructed peasants of Galilee. However extraordinary the change wrought in the minds of the earlier Apostles by the spirit of Christianity; however some of them, especially Peter and John, may have extended their labours beyond the precincts of Palestine, yet Paul appears to have exercised by far the greatest influence, not merely in the conversion of the Gentiles, but in emancipating the Christianity of the Jewish converts from the inveterate influence of their old religion.

Yet the first step towards the more comprehensive system was made by Peter. Samaria, indeed, had already received the new religion to a great extent; an innovation upon Jewish prejudice, remarkable both in itself and its results. The most important circum-

Paul and
Barnabas.

Differences between Jew and Gentile partially abrogated by Peter

stance in that transaction, the collision with Simon the magician, will be considered in a future chapter, that which describes the conflict of Christianity with Orientalism. The vision of Peter, which seemed by the Divine sanction to annul the distinction of meats, of itself threw down one of those barriers which separated the Jews from the rest of mankind (1). This sacred usage prohibited not merely all social intercourse, but all close or domestic communication with other races. But the figurative instruction which the Apostle inferred from this abrogation of all distinction between clean and unclean animals, was of still greater importance. The proselytes of the gate, that is, those heathens who, without submitting to circumcision, or acknowledging the claims of the whole law to their obedience, had embraced the main principles of Judaism, more particularly the unity of God, were at once admitted into the Christian community. Cornelius was, as it were, the representative of his class; his admission by the federal rite of baptism into the Christian community, the public sanction of the Almighty to this step by "the pouring out the gift of the Holy Ghost" upon the Gentiles, decided this part of the question (2). Still the admission into Christianity was *through Judaism*. It required all the influence of the Apostle, and his distinct asseveration that he acted by divine commission, to induce the Christians of Jerusalem to admit Gentiles imperfectly Judaised, and uninitiated by the national rite of circumcision into the race of Israel, to a participation in the kingdom of the Messiah.

To this subject we must however revert, when we attempt more fully to develop the internal conflict of Christianity with Judaism.

(1) Acts x. xi. to 21.

(2) It is disputed, whether Cornelius was, in fact, a proselyte of the Gate. (See, on one side, Lord Barrington's Works, vol. i. p. 128., and Benson's History of Christianity; on the other, Kuinzel, *in loco*.) He is called *εὐσεβὴς* and *φοβούμενος τὸν Θεόν*, the usual appellation of proselytes; he bestowed alms on the Jewish people; he observed the Jewish hours of prayer; he was evidently familiar with the Jewish belief in angels, and not unversed in the Jewish Scriptures. Yet, on the other hand, the objections are not without weight. The whole difficulty appears to arise from not considering how vaguely the term of "Proselyte of the Gate" must, from the nature of things, have been applied, and the different feelings entertained towards such converts by the different classes of the Jews. While the proselytes, properly so called,—those who were identified with the Jews by circumcision,—were a distinct and definite class; the Proselytes of the Gate must have comprehended all

looked with jealousy, even on the circumcised Proselytes; the terms of admission were made as difficult and repulsive as possible; on the imperfect, they looked with still greater suspicion, and were rather jealous of communicating their exclusive privileges, than eager to extend the influence of their opinions. But the more liberal must have acted on different principles: they must have encouraged the advances of incipient proselytes; the synagogues were open throughout the Roman Empire, and many who, like Horace, "went to scoff," may "have remained to pray." As, then, the Christian Apostles always commenced their labours in the synagogue of their countrymen, among all who might assemble there from regular habit, or accidental curiosity, they would address Heathen minds in every gradation of Jewish belief, from the proselyte who only wanted circumcision, to the Gentile who had only just begun to discover the superior reasonableness of the Jewish Theism. Hence the step from the conversion of imperfect

vices of the synagogue, and conformed in all respects, except circumcision, with the ceremonial law, down, through the countless shades of opinion, to those who merely admitted the first principle of Judaism,—the Unity of God; were occasional attendants in the synagogue; and had only, as it were, ascended the first steps on the threshold of conversion. The more rigid Jews

ciple of Judaism, the belief in one God, was an indispensable preliminary to his admission of Christianity. The one great decisive change was from the decree of the Apostolic council (Acts xiv.), obviously intended for real, though imperfect proselytes, to the total abrogation of Judaism by the doctrines of St. Paul.

The conversion of Cornelius took place before the persecution of Herod Agrippa, down to which period our history has traced the external conflict maintained by Christianity against the dominant Judaism. On the death of Herod, his son Agrippa being a minor and educated at Rome, a Roman prefect resumed the provincial government of Judæa. He ruled almost always with a stern, sometimes with an iron hand, and the gradually increasing turbulence of the province led to severity; severity with a profligate and tyrannical ruler degenerated into oppression; until the systematic cruelty of Florus maddened the nation into the last fatal insurrection. The Sanhedrin appear at no time to have possessed sufficient influence with the prefect to be permitted to take violent measures against the Christians. With Cuspius Fadus, who had transferred the custody of the high priest's robes into the Antonia, they were on no amicable terms. Tiberius Alexander, an apostate from Judaism, was little likely to lend himself to any acts of bigotry or persecution. During the prefecture of Cumanus, the massacre in the Temple, the sanguinary feuds between the Jews and Samaritans, occupied the public mind; it was a period of political disorder and confusion, which continued for a considerable time.

State of Ju-
dæa.

Procurator
Judææ,
A. D. 44.
A. D. 46.

A. D. 48.

The commencement of the administration of the whole province by the corrupt and dissolute Felix, the insurrection of Theudas, the reappearance of the sons of the Galilean Judas, the incursions of the predatory bands which rose in all quarters, would divert the attention of the ruler from a peaceful sect, who, to his apprehension, differed from their countrymen only in some harmless speculative opinions, and in their orderly and quiet conduct. If the Christians were thus secure in their peacefulness and obscurity from the hostility of the Roman rulers, the native Jewish authorities, gradually more and more in collision with their foreign masters, would not possess the power of conducting persecution to any extent. Instead of influencing the counsels of the prefect, the high priest was either a mere instrument, appointed by his caprice, or if he aspired to independent authority, in direct opposition to his tyrannous master. The native authorities were, in fact, continually in collision with the foreign ruler; one, Ananias, had been sent in chains to Rome as accessory to the tumults which had arisen between the Jews and the Samaritans; his successor, Jonathan, fell by the hand of an assassin, in the employ, or at least with the connivance, of the Roman governor. On his acquittal at Rome, Ananias returned at Jerusalem and reassumed the vacant pontificate; and it was during this period that Christianity, in the person of Paul, came again into conflict with the constituted authorities, as well as with the popular hostility. The prompt and decisive interference of the Roman guard; the protection and even the favour shown to Paul, directly it was discovered that he was not identified with any

A. D. 50.

High
Priest, A.
D. 46. to
49.

of the insurgent robbers; the adjournment of the cause to the tribunal of Felix at Cæsarea;—show how little weight or power was permitted either to the high priest or the Sanhedrin, and the slight respect paid to the religious feelings of the people.

The details of this remarkable transaction will command our notice, in the order of time, when we have traced the proceedings of Paul and his fellow missionaries among the Jews beyond the borders of Palestine, and exhibited the conflict which they maintained with Judaism in foreign countries. The new opening, as it were, for the extension of Christianity, after the conversion of Cornelius, directed the attention of Barnabas to Saul, who, since his flight from Jerusalem, had remained in secure retirement at Tarsus. From thence he was summoned by Barnabas to Antioch (1). Antioch, where the body of believers assumed the name of Christians, became, as it were, the head-quarters of the foreign operations of Christianity (2). After the mission of Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem during the famine (either about the time or soon after the Herodian persecution), these two distinguished teachers of the Gospel were invested, with the divine sanction, in the apostolic office (3). But these foreign operations were at first altogether confined to the Jewish population, which was scattered throughout the whole of Syria and Asia Minor. On their arrival in a town, which they had not visited before, they of course sought a hospitable reception among their countrymen; the first scene of their labours was the synagogue (4). In the Island of Cyprus, the native country of Barnabas, a considerable part of the population must have been of Jewish descent (5). Both at Salamis at the eastern, and at Paphos on the western, extremity, and, probably, in other places during their journey through the whole length of the island, they found flourishing communities of their countrymen. To the governor, a man of inquiring and philosophic mind (6), the simple principles of Judaism could not be unknown; and perhaps, the contrast between the chaste, and simple, and rational worship of the synagogue, and the proverbially sensual rites of Heathenism, for which Paphos was renowned, may have heightened his respect for, or increased his inclination to, the purer faith. The arrival of two new teachers among the Jews of the city, could not but reach the ears of Sergius Paulus; the sensation they excited among their countrymen awoke his curiosity. He had already encouraged the familiar attendance of a Jewish wonder-worker, a man who probably mis-

Paul and
Barnabas:
Apostles.

Cyprus.

Sergius
Paulus.

(1) Acts xi. 25.

(2) Acts, xi. 26.

(3) Acts, xiii. 2.

(4) Acts, xiii. 4—12.

(5) History of the Jews, iii. 12. In the fatal insurrection during the reign of Hadrian, they are said to have massacred 240,000 of the Grecian inhabitants, and obtained temporary possession of the island.

(6) The remarkable accuracy of St. Luke in naming the governor, proconsul, has been frequently observed. The provincial governors appointed by the Emperors were called *proprætores*, those by the Senate, *proconsuls*. That of Cyprus was properly in the nomination of the Emperor, but Augustus transferred his right, as to Cyprus and Narbonese Gaul, to the Senate. Dion Cassius, l. liv. p. 523.

used some skill in natural science for purposes of fraud and gain. Bar-Jesus (the son of Jesus or Joshua) was probably less actuated, in his opposition to the apostles, by Jewish bigotry, than by the apprehension of losing his influence with the governor. He saw, no doubt, in the apostles, adventurers like himself. The miraculous blindness with which the magician was struck, convinced the governor of the superior claims of the apostles; the beauty of the Christian doctrines filled him with astonishment; and the Roman proconsul, though not united by baptism to the Christian community, must, nevertheless, have added great weight, by his acknowledged support, to the cause of Christianity in Cyprus (1).

From Cyprus they crossed to the southern shore of Asia Minor, landed at Perga in Pamphylia, and passed through the chief cities of that region. In the more flourishing towns they found a considerable Jewish population, and the synagogue of the Jews appears to have been attended by great numbers of Gentiles, more or less disposed to embrace the tenets of Judaism. Every where the more rigid Jews met them with fierce and resentful opposition; but among the less bigoted of their countrymen, and this more unprejudiced class of proselytes, they made great progress. At the first considerable city in which they appeared, Antioch in Pisidia, the opposition of the Jews seems to have been so general, and the favourable disposition of their Gentile hearers so decided, that the apostles avowedly disclaimed all farther connection with the more violent party, and united themselves to the Gentile believers. Either from the number or the influence of the Jews in Antioch, the public interest in that dispute, instead of being confined within the synagogue, prevailed through the whole city; but the Jews had so much weight, especially with some of the women of rank, that they at length obtained the expulsion of the apostles from the city by the ruling authorities. At Iconium, to which city they retired, the opposition was still more violent; the populace was excited; and here many of the Gentiles uniting with the Jews against them, they were constrained to fly for their lives into the barbarous district of Lycaonia. Lystra and Derbe appear to have been almost entirely Heathen towns. The remarkable collision of the apostles with Paganism in the former of these places, will hereafter be considered. To Lystra, the hostility of the Jews pursued them, where, by some strange revulsion of popular feeling, Paul, a short time before worshipped as a God, was cast out of the city, half-dead. They proceeded to Derbe, and thence returned through the same cities to Antioch in Syria. The ordination of "elders (2)," to preside over the Christian communities, implies their secession from the synagogues of their

(1) Had he thus become altogether Christian, his baptism would assuredly have been mentioned by the sacred writer.

(2) Acts, xiv. 23

countrymen. In Jerusalem, from the multitude of synagogues, which belonged to the different races of foreign Jews, another might arise, or one of those usually occupied by the Galileans might pass into the separate possession of the Christians, without exciting much notice, particularly as great part of the public devotions of all classes were performed in the Temple, where the Christians were still regular attendants. Most likely the first distinct community which met in a chamber or place of assemblage of their own, the first Church, was formed at Antioch. To the Heathen this would appear nothing more than the establishment of a new Jewish synagogue; an event, whenever their numbers were considerable, of common occurrence. To the Jew alone it assumed the appearance of a dangerous and formidable apostasy from the religion of his ancestors.

Jewish attachment to the law
A. D. 49.

Council of Jerusalem,
A. D. 49.

The barrier was now thrown down, but Judaism rallied, as it were, for a last effort behind its ruins. It was now manifest that Christianity would no longer endure the rigid nationalism of the Jew, who demanded that every proselyte to his faith should be enrolled as a member of his race. Circumcision could no longer be maintained as the seal of conversion (1), but still the total abrogation of the Mosaic law, the extinction of all their privileges of descent, the substitution of a purely religious for a national community, to the Christianised Jew appeared, as it were, a kind of treason against the religious majesty of their ancestors: a conference became necessary between the leaders of the Christian community to avert an inevitable collision, which might be fatal to the progress of the religion. Already the peace of the flourishing community at Antioch (2), had been disturbed by some of the more zealous converts from Jerusalem, who still asserted the indispensable necessity of circumcision. Paul and Barnabas proceeded as delegates from the community at Antioch; and what is called (3) the council of Jerusalem, a full assembly of all the apostles then present in the Metropolis, solemnly debated this great question. How far the earlier apostles were themselves emancipated from the inveterate Judaism does not distinctly appear, but the situation of affairs required the most nicely-balanced judgment, united with the utmost moderation of temper. On one side a Pharisaic party had brought into Christianity a rigorous and passionate attachment to the Mosaic institutes, in their strictest and most minute provisions. On the

(1) The adherence, even of those Jews who might here be expected to be less bigoted to their institutions, to this distinctive rite of their religion is illustrated by many curious particulars in the history. Two foreign princes, Aziz king of Emesa, and Polemo king of Cilicia, submitted to circumcision, an indispensable stipulation, in order to obtain in marriage, the former Drusilla, the latter Bernice, princesses of the Herodian family. On one occasion the alliance of

some foreign troops was rejected, unless they would first qualify themselves in this manner for the distinction of associating with the Jews.

(2) Acts, xv. 1.

(3) It is uncertain whether James who presided in this assembly was either of the two James's included among the twelve apostles, or a distinct person, a relative of Jesus. The latter opinion rests on the authority of Eusebius.

other hand, beyond the borders of Palestine, far the greater number of converts had been formed from that intermediate class which stood between Heathenism and Judaism. There might seem, then, no alternative but to estrange one party by the abrogation of the law, or the other by the strict enforcement of all its provisions. Each party might appeal to the Divine sanction. To the eternal, the irrevocable sanctity of the law, the God of their Fathers, according to the Jewish opinion, was solemnly pledged; while the vision of Peter, which authorised the admission of the Gentiles into Christianity—still more the success of Paul and Barnabas, in proselyting the Heathen, accompanied by undeniable manifestations of Divine favour, seemed irresistible evidence of the Divine sanction to the abrogation of the law, as far as concerned the Gentile Proselytes. The influence of James effected a discreet and temperate compromise: Judaism as it were capitulated on honourable terms. The Christians were to be left to that freedom, enjoyed by the Proselytes of the Gate, but they were enjoined to pay so much respect to those with whom they were associated in religious worship, as to abstain from those practices, which were most offensive to their habits (1). The partaking of the sacrificial feasts in the idolatrous Temples was so plainly repugnant to the first principles, either of the Jewish or the Christian Theism, as to be altogether irreconcilable with the professed opinions of a proselyte to either. The using things strangled, and blood, for food appears to have been the most revolting to Jewish feeling; and perhaps among the dietetic regulations of the Mosaic law, none, in a southern climate, was more conducive to health. The last article in this celebrated decree was a moral prohibition, but, not improbably, directed more particularly against the dissolute rites of those Syrian and Asiatic religions, in which prostitution formed an essential part, and which prevailed to a great extent in the countries bordering upon Palestine (2).

The second journey (3) of Paul brought him more immediately into contact with Paganism. Though, no doubt, in every city there were resident Jews, with whom he took up his abode, and his first public appearance was in the synagogue of his countrymen, yet he is now more frequently extending, as it were, his aggressive operations into the dominions of Heathenism. If he found hospitality, no

second journey of Paul, A. D. 50

(1) The reason assigned for these regulations appears to infer that as yet the Christians, in general, met in the same places of religious assemblage with the Jews, at least this view gives a clear and simple sense to a much contested passage. These provisions were necessary because the Mosaic law was universally read and from immemorial usage in the synagogues. The direct violation of its most vital principles by any of those who joined in the common worship would be incongruous, and of course highly offensive to the more zealous Mosaicists.

(2) It should be remembered that as yet Christianity had only spread into countries, where this religious *πορνεσία*, chiefly prevailed, into Syria and Cyprus. Of the first we may form a fair notion, from Lucian's *Treatise de Dea Syria* and the Daphne of Antioch had no doubt already obtained its voluptuous celebrity; the latter, particularly Paphos, can require no illustration. Bentley's ingenious reading of *Χοιρῶν*, swine-flesh, wants the indispensable authority of any manuscripts.

(3) Acts, xvi. 1. to xviii. 22

doubt he encountered either violent or secret hostility from his brethren. Few circumstances however occur which belong more especially to the conflict between Judaism and Christianity.

Paul and Barnabas set out together on this more extensive journey, but on some dispute as to the companions who were to attend upon them, Barnabas turned aside with Mark to his native country of Cyprus; while Paul, accompanied by Silas, revisited those cities in Syria and Cilicia, where they had already established Christian communities.

At Lystra, Paul showed his deference to Jewish opinion by permitting a useful disciple, named Timothy, to be circumcised (1). But this case was peculiar, as Timothy, by his mother's side, was a Jew; and, though by a connection with a man of Greek race, she had forfeited both for herself and her offspring the privileges of Jewish descent, the circumcision of the son might, in a great degree, remove the stigma which attached to his birth, and which would render him less acceptable among his Jewish brethren. Having left this region, he ranged northward, through Phrygia, Galatia, and Mysia; but, instead of continuing his course towards the shore of the Black Sea to Bithynia, admonished by a vision, he passed to Europe, and at Neapolis, in Macedonia (2), landed the obscure and unregarded individual, to whom Europe, in Christianity, owes the great principle of her civilisation, the predominant element in her superiority over the more barbarous and unenlightened quarters of the world. At Philippi, the Jews being few in number, appear only to have had a *Proseucha*, a smaller place of public worship, as usual, near the sea-side; at Thessalonica they were more numerous, and had a synagogue (3); at Berea, they appear likewise to have formed a flourishing community; even at Athens the Jews had made many proselytes. Corinth, a new colony of settlers from all quarters, a central mercantile mart, through which passed a great part of the commerce between the East and West, offered a still more eligible residence for the Jews, who, no doubt, had already become traders to a considerable extent (4). Their numbers had been lately increased by their expulsion from Rome, under the Emperor Claudius (5). This edict is attributed by

(1) Acts, xvi. 3.

(2) Acts, xvi. 11, 12.

(3) Acts, xvii. 1. Thessalonica is a city where the Jews have perhaps resided for a longer period, in considerable numbers, than in any other, at least in Europe. When the Jews fled from Christian persecution to the milder oppression of the Turks, vast numbers settled at Thessalonica, Hist. Jews, iii. Von Hammer states the present population of Thessalonica (Salonichi) at 16,000 Greeks; 12,000 Jews; and 50,000 Turks. *Osmanische Geschichte*, i. 442.

(4) Corinth, since its demolition by Mammilius, had lain in ruins till the time of Julius Cæsar, who established a colony on its site. From the advantages of its situation, the connecting link,

as it were, between Italy, the north of Greece, and Asia, it grew up rapidly to all its former wealth and splendour.

(5) The manner in which this event is related by the Epigrammatic Biographer, even the mistakes in his account are remarkably characteristic. Judæos, Chresto duce, assidue tumultuantes Roma expulit. The confusion between the religion and its founder, and the substitution of the word Chrestos, a good man, which would bear an intelligible sense to a heathen for Christos (the anointed), which would only convey any distinct notion to a Jew, illustrate the state of things. Cum perperam Christianus pronuntiatur a vobis (nam nec nominis est certa notitia penes vos) de suavitate vel benignitate compositum est.

Suetonius to the tumults excited by the mutual hostility between the Jews and Christians. Christianity, therefore, must thus early have made considerable progress in Rome. The scenes of riot were, probably, either like those which took place in the Asiatic cities, where the Jews attempted to use violence against the Christians; or, as in Corinth itself, where the tribunal of the magistrate was disturbed by fierce, and to him unintelligible disputes, as he supposed, between two Jewish factions. With two of the exiles, Aquila and Priscilla, Paul, as practising the same trade, that of tent-makers (1), made a more intimate connection, residing with them, and pursuing their craft in common (2). At Corinth, possibly for the first time, the Christians openly seceded from the Jews, and obtained a separate school of public instruction; even the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, became a convert. But the consequence of this secession was the more declared and open animosity of the Jewish party, which ended in an appeal to the public tribunal of the governor. The result of the trial before the judgment-seat of Gallio, the pro-consul of Achaia, appears to have been an ebullition of popular indignation in favour of the Christians, as another of the chief rulers of the synagogue, probably the prosecutor of the Christians, underwent the punishment of scourging before the tribunal.

From Corinth (3) Paul returned by sea to Cæsarea (4), and from thence to Antioch.

The third journey of St. Paul (5) belongs still more exclusively to the conflict of Christianity with Paganism. At Ephesus (6) alone, where he arrived after a circuit through Phrygia and Galatia, he encountered some wandering wonder-working sons of a certain Sceva, a Jew, who attempted to imitate the miraculous cures which he wrought. The failure of the exorcism, which they endeavoured to perform by the name of Jesus, and which only increased the violence of the lunatic, made a deep impression on the whole Jewish population. His circuit through Macedonia, Greece, back to Phi-

Third
journey of
Paul.

Tert. Apolog. c. 3. Sed exponenda hujus nominis ratio est propter ignorantium errorem, qui cum immutata litera Christum solent dicere. Lact. Inst. 4. 7. 5.

(1) The Jews thought it right that every one, even the learned, should know some art or trade. Sapientes plurimi artem aliquam fecerunt ne aliorum beneficentia indigerent. Maimonides. See Lightfoot, iii. 227.

(2) There was a coarse stuff called Cilicium, made of goats' hair, manufactured in the native country of Paul, and used for the purpose of portable tents, which it is ingeniously conjectured may have been the art practised by Paul.

(3) From Corinth after he had been rejoined by Silvas (Silvanus) and Timotheus, was most probably written the first epistle to the Thessalonians. This epistle is full of allusions to his recent journey. On his arrival at Athens he had sent back Timotheus to ascertain the state of the infant church. Subsequently it appears that the

more Jewish opinion of the immediate reappearance of the Messiah to judgment, had gained great ground in the community. It is slightly alluded to in the first epistle, v. 2, 3. The second seems to have been written expressly to counteract this notion.

(4) We make no observation on the vow made at Cenchrea, as we follow the natural construction of the words. The Vulgate, St. Chrysostom, and many more commentators, attribute the vow, whatever it was, to Aquila, not to Paul.

There is great doubt as to the authenticity of the clause, verse 21. ("I must by all means keep this feast that cometh in Jerusalem.") Those who suppose it to be genuine, explain the *ἀναγκα* in the next verse, as going up to Jerusalem, but on the whole I am inclined to doubt any such visit.

(5) Acts, xviii. 23. xxi. 6.

(6) Acts, xviii. 24.

lippi, down the Ægean to Miletus, by Cos, Rhodes, Patara to Tyre, and thence to Cæsarea, brought him again near to Jerusalem, where he had determined to appear at the feast of Pentecost. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends, and the prophetic denunciation of his imprisonment by a certain Agabus, he adhered to his resolution of confronting the whole hostile nation at their great concourse. For not only would the Jews, but perhaps the Jewish Christians likewise, in the head-quarters of Judaism, confederate against this renegade, who not only asserted Jesus to be the Messiah, but had avowedly raised the uncircumcised Gentiles to the level of, if not to a superiority over, the descendant of Israel. Yet, of the real nature of St. Paul's Christianity, they were still singularly, yet characteristically ignorant; they could not yet persuade themselves that Christianity aspired to a total independence of Judaism; their Temple was still, as it were, the vestibule to the Divine favour; and, having no notion that the Gentile converts to Christianity would be altogether indifferent as to the local sanctity of any edifice, they appear to have apprehended an invasion, or, at least, a secret attempt to introduce the uncircumcised to the privilege of worship within the hallowed precincts. The motive of Paul in visiting Jerusalem was probably to allay the jealousy of his countrymen; the period selected for his visit was, as it were, the birthday of the Law (1); the solemnity which commemorated the divine enactment of that code, which every Jew considered of eternal and irreversible authority. Nor did he lay aside his customary prudence. He complied with the advice of his friends, and instead of appearing in the Temple as an ordinary worshipper, that he might show his own personal reverence for the usages of his ancestors, he united himself to four persons who had taken upon them a vow, a deliberate acknowledgement not merely of respect for, but of zeal beyond, the law (2). His person, however, was too well known to the Asiatic Jews not to be recognised; a sudden outcry was raised against him—he was charged with having violated the sanctity of the holy precincts by introducing uncircumcised strangers, Trophimus an Ephesian, with whom he had been familiarly conversing in the city, within those pillars, or palisades, which, in the three predominant languages of the time, Hebrew, Greek, and Latin, forbade the advance of any who were not of pure Jewish descent. He was dragged out, no doubt, into the Court of the Gentiles, the doors closed, and but for the prompt interference of the Roman guard, which was always mounted, particularly during the days of festival, he would have fallen a victim to the popular fury. For while the unconverted Jews would pursue his life with implacable indignation, he could, at best, expect no as-

Paul in Jerusalem.

A. D. 58.

Paul in the Temple.

(1) The ceasing to attend at the Passover, after, in his own language, "the great Passover had been sacrificed," is a circumstance by no means unworthy of notice.

(2) Acts, xxi. 17—26.

sistance from the Jewish Christians. The interposition of the Roman commander in Jerusalem was called forth, rather to suppress a dangerous riot, than to rescue an innocent victim from the tumultuous violence of the populace. Lysias at first supposed Paul to be one of the insurgent chieftains who had disturbed the public peace during the whole administration of Felix. His fears identified him with a Jew of Egyptian birth, who, a short time before, had appeared on the Mount of Olives at the head of above 30,000 fanatic followers; and, though his partizans were scattered by the decisive measures of Felix, had contrived to make his escape (1). The impression that his insurrection had made on the minds of the Romans, is shown by the terror of his reappearance, which seems to have haunted the mind of Lysias. The ease and purity with which Paul addressed him in Greek, as these insurgents probably communicated with their followers only in the dialect of the country; the commanding serenity of his demeanour; and the declaration that he was a citizen of an Asiatic town, not a native of Palestine, so far influenced Lysias in his favour, as to permit him to address the multitude. It was probably from the flight of steps which led from the outer court of the Temple up into the Antonia that Paul commenced his harangue. He spoke in the vernacular language of the country, and was heard in silence, as far as his account of his conversion to the new religion; but directly that he touched on the dangerous subject of the admission of the Gentiles to the privileges of Christianity, the popular frenzy broke out again with such violence, as scarcely to be controlled by the Roman military. Paul was led away into the court of the fortress, and the commander, who probably understood nothing of his address, but only saw, that instead of allaying, it increased the turbulence of the people (for with the characteristic violence of an Asiatic mob, they are described as casting off their clothes, and throwing dust into the air), gave orders that he should suffer the usual punishment of scourging with rods, in order that he might be forced to confess the real origin of the disturbance. But this proceeding was arrested by Paul's claiming the privilege of a Roman citizen, whom it was treason against the majesty of the Roman people to expose to such indignity (2). The soldiers, or lictors, engaged in scourging him recoiled in terror. The respect of Lysias himself for his prisoner rose to more than its former height, for having himself purchased this valuable privilege at a high price, one who had inherited the same right appeared an important personage in his estimation.

The next morning the Sanhedrin was convened, and Paul was again brought into the Temple, to the Gazith, the chamber where the Sanhedrin held its judicial meetings. Ananias presided in the

Apprehension of Paul.

(1) Hist. of Jews, ii. 207.

2; Acts, xxii. 27, 29.

Paul be-
fore the
Sanhe-
drin.

assembly as High Priest, an office which he possessed rather by usurpation than legitimate authority. After the tumults between the Samaritans and the Jews, during the administration of Cumanus, Ananias had, as was before briefly stated, been sent as a prisoner to Rome, to answer for the charges against his nation (1). After two years he had been released by the interest of Agrippa, and allowed to return to Jerusalem. In the meantime the High Priesthood had been filled by Jonathan, who was murdered by assassins in the Temple, employed, or at least connived at, by the governor (2). Ananias appears to have resumed the vacant authority, until the appointment of Ismael, son of Fabi, by Agrippa (3). Ananias was of the Sadducaic party, a man harsh, venal, and ambitious. Faction most probably ran very high in the national council; we are inclined to suppose, from the favourable expressions of Josephus, that the murdered Jonathan was of the Pharisaic sect; and his recent death, and the usurpation of the office by Ananias, would incline the Pharisaic faction to resist all measures proposed by their adversaries. Of this state of things Paul seems to have been fully aware. He commenced with a solemn protestation of his innocence, which so excited the indignation of Ananias, that he commanded him to be struck over the mouth, a common punishment in the East for language which may displease those in power (4). The answer of St. Paul to this arbitrary violation of the law, for by the Jewish course of justice no punishment could be inflicted without a formal sentence, was in a tone of vehement indignation,—“God shall smite thee, thou whited wall; for sittest thou to judge me after the law, and commandest me to be smitten contrary to the law?” Rebuked for thus disrespectfully answering the High Priest, Paul answered that he did not know that there was any one at that time lawfully exercising the office of High Priest (5), an office which he was bound, by the strict letter of the sacred writings, to treat with profound respect. He proceeded, without scruple, to avail himself of the dissensions of the Court; for by resting his defence on his belief in the resurrection, he irritated more violently the Sadducaic party, but threw that of the Pharisees on his own side. The angry discussion was terminated by the interposition of the Roman commander, who again withdrew Paul into the citadel. Yet his life was not secure even there. The crime of assassination had become fearfully frequent in Jerusalem. Neither the sanctity of the Temple protected the unsuspecting worshipper from the secret dagger, nor, as we have seen, did the majesty of the High Priest’s office secure the first religious and civil magistrate of the nation from the same ignoble fate. A conspiracy was formed by some of these fanatic

(1) Joseph. Ant. xx. 6. 2.

(2) Joseph. xx. 8. 5.

(3) A. D. 56. Joseph. Ant. xx. 8. 8.

(4) Acts, xxiii. 2, 3.

(5) “I wist not that there was a High Priest;” such appears to be the translation of this passage, suggested by Mr. Greswell, most agreeable to the sense.

zealots against the life of Paul; but the plot being discovered by one of his relatives, a sister's son, he was sent under a strong guard to Cæsarea, the residence of the Roman provincial governor, the disolute and tyrannical Felix.

The Sanhedrin pursued their hated adversary to the tribunal of the Governor, but with Felix they possessed no commanding influence. A hired orator, whom from his name we may conjecture to have been a Roman, employed perhaps according to the usage, which provided that all legal proceedings should be conducted in the Latin language, appeared as their advocate before the tribunal (1). But the defence of Paul against the charge of sedition, of innovation, and the profanation of the Temple, was equally successful with Felix, who was well acquainted with the Jewish character, and by no means disposed to lend himself to their passions and animosities. The charge therefore was dismissed. Paul, though not set at liberty, was allowed free intercourse with his Christian brethren; Felix himself even condescended to hear, and heard not without emotion, the high moral doctrines of St. Paul, which were so much at variance with his unjust and adulterous life. But it was not so much the virtue as the rapacity of Felix which thus inclined him to look with favour upon the Apostle: knowing probably the profuse liberality of the Christians, and their zealous attachment to their teacher, he expected that the liberty of Paul would be purchased at any price he might demand. For the two last years therefore of the administration of Felix, Paul remained a prisoner; and Felix, at his departure, well aware that accusations were lodged against him by the representatives of the Jewish nation, endeavoured to propitiate their favour by leaving him still in custody (2). Nor had the Jews lost sight of this great object of animosity. Before the new governor, Porcius Festus, a man of rigid justice, and less acquainted with the Jewish character, their charges were renewed with the utmost acrimony. On his first visit to Jerusalem, the High Priest demanded that Paul should be sent back for trial before the Sanhedrin; and though Festus refused the petition till he should himself have investigated the case at Cæsarea, on his return he proposed that Paul should undergo a public examination at Jerusalem in his own presence. The design of the Jews was to

Paul sent
to Cæsarea.
Paul before
Felix.

Paul in
prison at
Cæsarea.

A. D. 58.

(1) Acts, xxiv. 1—26.

(2) There is great chronological difficulty in arranging this part of the administration of Felix. But the difficulty arises, not so much in harmonising the narrative of the Acts with the historians of the period, as in reconciling Josephus with Tacitus. Taking the account of Josephus, it is impossible to compress all the events of that part of the administration of Felix, which he places after the accession of Nero, into a single year. Yet he states that, on the recall of Felix, he only escaped punishment for his crimes through the interest of his brother, Pallas. Yet, according to Tacitus, the influence of Pallas

with Nero ceased in the second year of his reign, and he was deposed from all his offices. In the third he was indicted of *leze majeste*, and his acquittal was far from acceptable to the Emperor. In the fourth year his protectress Agrippina was discarded for Poppæa; in the next she was put to death. In the ninth of Nero's reign Pallas himself, though charged with no new crime, was poisoned. The question therefore is, whether, in any intermediate period, he could have regained, by any intrigue, sufficient influence to shield his brother from the prosecution of the Jews.

surprise and assassinate the prisoner, and Paul, probably informed of their secret intentions, persisted in his appeal to Cæsar. To this appeal from a Roman citizen, the governor could not refuse his assent. The younger Agrippa had now returned from Rome, where he had resided during his minority. He had succeeded to part only of his father's dominions; he was in possession of the Asmonean palace at Jerusalem, and had the right of appointing the High Priest, which he exercised apparently with all the capricious despotism of a Roman governor. He appeared in great pomp at Cæsarea, with his sister Bernice, on a visit to Festus. The Roman governor appears to have consulted him, as a man of moderation and knowledge of the Jewish law, upon the case of Paul. The Apostle was summoned before him. The defence of Paul made a strong impression upon Agrippa, who, though not a convert, was probably from that time favourably disposed to Christianity. The appeal of Paul to the Emperor was irrevocable by an inferior authority; whether he would have preferred remaining in Judæa, after an acquittal from Festus, and perhaps under the protection of Agrippa, or whether to his own mind Rome offered a more noble and promising field for his Christian zeal, Paul, setting forth on his voyage, left probably for ever the land of his forefathers—that land beyond all others inhospitable to the religion of Christ—that land which Paul, perhaps almost alone of Jewish descent, had ceased to consider the one narrow portion of the habitable world, which the love of the Universal Father had sanctified as the chosen dwelling of his people, as the future seat of dominion, glory, and bliss.

Paul before
Agrippa.

Paul sent
to Rome.

The great object of Jewish animosity had escaped the hostility of the Sanhedrin; but an opportunity soon occurred of wreaking their baffled vengeance on another victim, far less obnoxious to the general feelings even of the more bigoted among the Jews. The head of the Christian community in Jerusalem was James, whom Josephus himself, if the expression in that remarkable passage be genuine (which is difficult to believe), dignifies with the appellation of the brother of Jesus. On the death of Festus, and before the arrival of his successor Albinus, the High Priesthood was in the hands of Annas, or Ananus, the last of five sons of the former Ananas, who had held that rank. Annas was the head of the Sadduceic party, and seized the opportunity of this suspension of the Roman authority, to reassert the power of the Sanhedrin over life and death. Many persons, whom it is impossible not to suppose Christians, were executed by the legal punishment of stoning. Among these, the head of the community was the most exposed to the animosity of the government, and therefore least likely to escape in their day of temporary power. The fact of the murder of St. James, at least of certain supposed offenders against the law, whom it is

A. D. 63

Martyr-
dom of
James.

difficult not to identify with the Christians (1), rests on the authority of the Jewish historian (2) : in the details which are related on the still more questionable testimony of Hegesippus (3), we feel that we are passing from the clear and pellucid air of the apostolic history, into the misty atmosphere of legend. We would willingly attempt to disentangle the more probable circumstances of this impressive story from the embellishments of later invention ; but it happens that its more striking and picturesque incidents, are precisely the least credible. After withdrawing every particular inconsistent either with the character or usages of the time, little remains but the simple facts that James was so highly esteemed in Jerusalem, as to have received the appellation of the Just (a title, it should seem, clearly of Jewish origin) ; that he perished during this short period of the sanguinary administration of Ananus, possibly was thrown down in a tumult from the precipitous walls of the Temple, where a more merciful persecutor put an end to his sufferings with a fuller's club ; finally, that these cruel proceedings of Ananus were contemplated with abhorrence by the more moderate, probably by the whole Pharisaic party ; his degradation from the supreme office was demanded, and hailed with satisfaction by the predominant sentiment of the people.

But the days of Jewish persecution were drawing to a close. Even religious animosity was subdued in the collision of still fiercer passions. A darker and more absorbing interest, the fate of the nation in the imminent, the inevitable conflict with the arms of

Jewish
war.

(1) Connecting this narrative of Josephus, even without admitting the authenticity of the passage about St. James, with the proceedings against St. Paul as related in the Acts, it appears to me highly improbable that, if Ananus put any persons to death for crimes against religion, they should have been any other than Christians. Who but Christians would be obnoxious to capital punishment? and against whom, but them, would a legal conviction be obtained? Certainly not against the Pharisees, who went beyond the law, or the zealots and followers of Judas the Galilean, whose fate would have excited little commiseration or regret among the moderate and peaceful part of the community. Lardner therefore appears to me in error, in admitting the prosecutions of Ananus, but disconnecting them from the Christian history.

(2) Joseph. Ant. xx. 8. 1. Lardner's Jewish Testimonies, vol. iiii. p. 342. 4to. edit.

(3) This narrative of Hegesippus has undergone the searching criticism of Scaliger in Chron. Euseb. and Le Clerc, Hist. Eccles. and Ars Critica; it has been freely defended by Petavius, and zealously by Tillamont. Heinichen, the recent editor of Eusebius, seems desirous to trace some vestiges of truth. In these early forgeries it is not only interesting and important to ascertain the truth or falsehood of the traditions themselves, but the design and the authors of such pious frauds. This legend seems imagined in a spirit of Christian asceticism, endeavouring to conform itself to Jewish usage, of which, nevertheless it betrays remarkable ignorance. It

attributes to the Christian bishop the Nazaritish abstinence from the time of his birth, not only from wine, but, in the spirit of Buddhism, from every thing which had life; the self-denial of the luxury of anointing with oil, with a monkish abhorrence of ablutions—a practice positively commanded in the law, and from which no Jew abstained. It gives him the power of entering the Holy Place at all times,—a practice utterly in opposition to the vital principles of Judaism, as he could not have been of the race of Aaron. It describes his kneeling till his knees were as hard as those of a camel—another indication of the growing spirit of monkery. We may add the injudicious introduction of the "Scribes and Pharisees," in the language of the gospel, as the authors of his fate; which, according to the more probable account of Josephus, and the change in the state of feeling in Jerusalem, was solely to be attributed to the Sadducees. The final improbability is the leading to the pinnacle of the Temple (a circumstance obviously borrowed from our Lord's temptation), a man who had been for years the acknowledged head of the Christian community in Jerusalem, that he might publicly dissuade the people from believing in Christ; still further his burial after such a death within the walls of the city, and close to the Temple: all these incongruities indicate a period at which Christianity had begun to degenerate into asceticism, and had been so long estranged from Judaism as to be ignorant of its real character and usages.

Rome, occupied the Jewish mind in every quarter of the world, in Palestine mingling personal apprehensions, and either a trembling sense of the insecurity of life, or a desperate determination to risk life itself for liberty, with the more appalling anticipations of the national destiny, the total extinction of the Heaven-ordained polity, the ruin of the city of Sion, and the Temple of God. To the ferocious and fanatical party, who gradually assumed the ascendancy, Christianity would be obnoxious, as secluding its peaceful followers from all participation in the hopes, the crimes, or what, in a worldly sense, might have been, not unjustly, considered the glories of the insurrection. Still, to whatever dangers or trials they were exposed, they were the desultory and casual attacks of individual hostility, rather than the systematic and determined persecution of one ruling party. Nor, perhaps, were they looked upon with the same animosity as many of the more eminent and influential of the Jews, who vainly attempted to allay the wild ferment. A general tradition, preserved by Eusebius, intimates that the Christian community, especially forewarned by Providence, left Jerusalem before the formation of the siege, and took refuge in the town of Pella, in the Trans-Jordanic province. According to Josephus, the same course was pursued by most of the higher order, who could escape in time from the sword of the Zealot or the Idumean. Rabbinical tradition dates from the same period the flight of the Sanhedrin from the Capital: its first place of refuge, without the walls of Jerusalem, was Jafna (Jamnia), from whence it passed to other cities, until its final settlement in Tiberias (1).

Probable
effect of
the fall of
Jerusalem
on Chris-
tianity.

The Jewish war, the final desolation of the national polity; the destruction of the city, and the demolition of the Temple, were events which could not but influence the progress of Christianity to a far greater extent, than by merely depriving the Jews of the power to persecute under a legal form. While the Christian beheld in all these unexampled horrors the accomplishment of predictions uttered by his Lord, the less infatuated among the Jews could not be ignorant, that such predictions prevailed among the Christians. However the prudence of the latter might shrink from exasperating the more violent party, by the open promulgation of such dispiriting and ill-omened auguries, they must have transpired among those who were hesitating between the two parties, and powerfully tended to throw that fluctuating mass into the preponderating scale of Christianity. With some of the Jews, no doubt, the hope in the coming of the Messiah must have expired with the fall of the Temple. Not merely was the period of time, assigned, according to the general interpretation of the prophecies, for the appearance of the Deliverer, gone by, but their less stern and obsti-

(1) Hist. of Jews, iii. 95.

nate Judaism must have begun to entertain apprehensions, that the visible rejection of the people intimated, not obscurely, the withdrawal of the Divine favour. They would thus be thrown back, as it were, upon Jesus of Nazareth as the only possible Messiah, and listen to his claims with greater inclination to believe. The alternative might seem to be between him and the desperate abandonment, or the adjournment to an indefinite period, of all their hopes of redemption. The hearts of many would be softened by the experience of personal suffering, or the sight of so many cases of individual misery. Christianity, with its consolatory promises, must have appeared the only refuge to those with whom the wretchedness of their temporal condition seemed to invalidate their hopes of an hereditary claim to everlasting life as children of Abraham; where they despaired of a temporal, they would be more inclined to accept a spiritual, and moral deliverance. At the same time the temporary advantage of the few converts, gained from such motives, would be counterbalanced by the more complete alienation of the Jewish mind from a race, who not only apostatised from the religion of their fathers, but by no means repudiated the most intimate connection with the race of Esau, for thus the dark hostility of the Jews began to denominate the Romans. By the absorption of this intermediate class, who had wavered between Christianity and Judaism, who either melted into the mass of the Christian party, or yielded themselves to the desperate infatuation of Judaism, the breach between the Jew and the Christian became more wide and irreparable. The prouder and more obstinate Jew sternly wrapped himself up in his sullen isolation; his aversion from the rest of mankind, under the sense of galling oppression, and of disappointed pride, settled into hard hostility. That which those of less fanatic Judaism found in Christianity, he sought in a stronger attachment to his own distinctive ceremonial; in a more passionate and deep-rooted conviction of his own prerogative, as the elect people of God. He surrendered himself, a willing captive, to the new priestly dominion, that of the Rabbins, which enslaved his whole life to a system of minute ordinances; he rejoiced in the rivetting and multiplying those bonds, which had been burst by Christianity, but which he wore as the badge of hopes still to be fulfilled, of glories which were at length to compensate for his present humiliation.

Effect on
the Jews.

This more complete alienation between the Jew and the Christian tended to weaken that internal spirit of Judaism, which, nevertheless, was eradicated with the utmost difficulty, and indeed has perpetually revived within the bosom of Christianity under another name. Down to the destruction of Jerusalem, Palestine, or rather Jerusalem itself, was at once the centre and the source of this predominant influence. In foreign countries, as we shall presently explain, the irrepealable and eternal sanctity of the Mosaic

Law, was the repressive power which was continually struggling against the expansive force of Christianity. In Jerusalem this power was the holiness of the Temple, and therefore, with the fall of the Temple, this strongest bond, with which the heart of the Jewish Christian was rivetted to his old religion, at once burst asunder. To him the practice of his Lord and the Apostles had seemed to confirm the inalienable local sanctity of this "chosen dwelling" of God; and while it yet stood in all its undegraded splendour, to the Christian of Jerusalem it was almost impossible fully to admit the first principle of Christianity, that the Universal Father is worshipped in any part of his created universe with equal advantage. One mark by which the Jewish race was designated as the great religious caste of mankind, was thus for ever abolished. The synagogue had no reverential dignity, no old and sacred majesty to the mind of the convert, beyond his own equally humble and unimposing place of devotion. Hence even before the destruction of the Temple, this feeling depended upon the peculiar circumstances of the individual convert.

Though even among the foreign Jews the respect for the Temple was maintained by traditionary reverence, though the impost for its maintenance was regularly levied and willingly paid by the race of Israel in every part of the Roman empire, and occasional visits to the capital at the periods of the great festivals, revived in many the old sacred impressions, still, according to the universal principles of human nature, the more remote the residence, and the less frequent the impression of the Temple services upon the senses, the weaker became this first conservative principle of Jewish feeling.

Jewish attachment to the Law

But there remained another element of that exclusiveness, which was the primary principle of the existing Judaism; that exclusiveness, which limiting the Divine favour to a certain race, would scarcely believe that foreign branches could be engrafted into the parent stock, even though incorporated with it; and still obstinately resisted the notion that Gentiles, without becoming Jews, could share in the blessings of the promised Messiah; or, in their state of uncircumcision, or at least of insubordination to the Mosaic ordinances, become heirs of the kingdom of Heaven.

What the Temple was to the inhabitant of Jerusalem, was the Law to the worshipper in the synagogue. As early, no doubt, as the present time, the book of the Law was the one great sacred object in every religious edifice of the Jews in all parts of the world. It was deposited in a kind of ark; it was placed in that part of the synagogue which represented the Holy of Holies; it was brought forth with solemn reverence by the "angel" of the assembly; it was heard as an "oracle of God" from the sanctuary. The whole rabbinical supremacy rested on their privilege as interpreters of

the law; and tradition, though, in fact, it assumed a co-ordinate authority, yet veiled its pretensions under the humbler character, of an exposition, a supplementary comment, on the heaven-enacted code. If we reascend, in our history, towards the period in which Christianity first opened its pale to the Gentiles, we shall find that this was the prevailing power by which the internal Judaism maintained its conflict with purer and more liberal Christianity within its own sphere. Even at Antioch, the Christian community had been in danger from this principle of separation; the Jewish converts, jealous of all encroachment upon the law, had drawn off and insulated themselves from those of the Gentiles (1). Peter withdrew within the narrower and more exclusive party; Barnabas alone, the companion and supporter of Paul, did not incline to the same course (2). It required all the energy and resolution of Paul to resist the example and influence of the older Apostles. His public expostulation had the effect of allaying the discord at Antioch; and the temperate and conciliatory measures adopted in Jerusalem, to a certain degree reunited the conflicting parties. Still, in most places where Paul established a new community, immediately after his departure this same spirit of Judaism seems to have rallied, and attempted to re-establish the great exclusive principle, that Christianity was no more than Judaism, completed by the reception of Jesus as the Messiah. The universal religion of Christ was thus in perpetual danger of being contracted into a national and ritual worship. The eternal law of Moses was still to maintain its authority with all its cumbrous framework of observances; and the Gentile proselytes who were ready to submit to the faith of Christ, with its simple and exquisite morality, were likewise to submit to all the countless provisions, and, now in many respects, unmeaning and unintelligible regulations, of diet, dress, manners, and conduct. This conflict may be traced most clearly in the Epistles of St. Paul, particularly in those to the remote communities in Galatia and in Rome. The former, written probably during the residence of the Apostle at Ephesus, was addressed to the Christians of Galatia, a district in the northern part of Asia Minor, occupied by a mingled population (3). The descendants of the Gaulish invaders, from whom the region derived its name, retained to a late period vestiges of their original race, in the Celtic dialect, and probably great numbers of Jews had settled in these quarters. Paul had twice visited the country, and his Epistle

(1) It is difficult to decide whether this dispute took place before or after the decree of the assembly in Jerusalem. Plank, in his *Geschichte des Christenthums*, places it before the decree, and on the whole this appears the most probable opinion. The event is noticed here as exemplifying the Judaizing spirit rather than in strict chronological order.

(2) Acts, xv.

(3) We decline the controversy concerning the place and time at which the different epistles were written; we shall give only the result, not the process of our investigations. This to the Galatians we suppose to have been written during St. Paul's first visit to Ephesus. (Acts, xix.)

The strength of the internal Judaism within the church

opposed by St. Paul.

was written at no long period after his second visit. But even in that short interval, Judaism had revived its pretensions. The adversaries of Paul had even gone so far as to disclaim him as an Apostle of Christianity; and before he vindicates the essential independence of the new faith, and declares the Jewish law to have been only a temporary institution (1), designed during a dark and barbarous period of human society, to keep alive the first principles of true religion, he has to assert his own divine appointment as a delegated teacher of Christianity (2).

The Epistle to the Romans (3) enters with more full and elaborate argument into the same momentous question. The History of the Roman community is most remarkable. It grew up in silence, founded by some unknown teachers (4), probably of those who were present in Jerusalem, at the first publication of Christianity by the Apostles. During the reign of Claudius it had made so much progress, as to excite open tumults and dissensions among the Jewish population of Rome; these animosities rose to such a height, that the attention of the government was aroused, and both parties expelled from the city. With some of these exiles, Aquila and Priscilla, St. Paul, as we have seen, formed an intimate connection during his first visit to Corinth: from them he received information of the extraordinary progress of the faith in Rome. The Jews seem quietly to have crept back to their old quarters, when the rigour with which the Imperial Edict was at first executed, had insensibly relaxed; and from these persons on their return to the capital, and most likely from other Roman Christians, who may have taken refuge in Corinth (5), or in other cities where Paul had founded Christian communities, the first, or at least the more perfect knowledge of the higher Christianity, taught by the Apostle of the Gentiles, would be conveyed to Rome. So complete indeed does he appear to consider the first establishment of Christianity in Rome, that he merely proposes to take that city in his way to a remote region, that of Spain (6). The manner in which he recounts, in the last chapter, the names of the more distinguished Roman

(1) Galat. iii. 19.

(2) Galat. i. 1, 2.

(3) This epistle, there seems no doubt, was written from Corinth, during St. Paul's second residence in that city.

(4) The foundation of the church of Rome by either St. Peter or St. Paul is utterly irreconcilable with any reasonable view of the Apostolic history. Among Roman Catholic writers, Count Stolberg abandons this point, and carries St. Peter to Rome for the first time at the commencement of Nero's reign. The account in the Acts seems to be so far absolutely conclusive. Many protestants of the highest learning are as unwilling to reject the general tradition of St. Peter's residence in Rome. This question will recur on another occasion. As to St. Paul, the first chapter of this epistle is positive evidence,

that the foundation of the church in Rome was long previous to his visit to the western metropolis of the world.

(5) It would appear probable that the greater part of the Christian community took refuge, with Aquila and Priscilla, in Corinth, and the neighbouring port of Cenchren.

(6) The views of Paul on so remote a province as Spain, at so early a period of his journey, appear to justify the notion, that there was a considerable Jewish population in that country. It is not impossible that many of the "Libertines" may have made their way from Sardinia. There is a curious tradition among the Spanish Jews, that they were resident in that country before the birth of our Saviour, and consequently had no concern in his death. See Hist. of Jews, iii. p. 142.

converts, implies both that the community was numerous and that the name of Paul was held in high estimation by its leading members. It is evident that Christianity had advanced already beyond the Jewish population, and the question of necessary conformity to the Mosaic law was strongly agitated. It is therefore the main scope of this celebrated epistle to annul for ever this claim of the Mosaic law to a perpetual authority to show Christianity as a part of the providential design in the moral history of man, while Judaism was but a temporary institution, unequal to, as it was unintended for, the great end of revealing the immortality of mankind, altogether repealed by this more wide and universal system, which comprehends in its beneficent purposes the whole human race.

Closely allied with this main element of Judaism, which struggled so obstinately against the Christianity of St. Paul, was the notion of the approaching end of the world, the final consummation of all things in the second coming of the Messiah. It has been shown how essential and integral a part of the Jewish belief in the Messiah was this expectation of the final completion of his mission in the dissolution of the world, and the restoration of a paradisiacal state in which the descendants of Abraham were to receive their destined inheritance. To many of the Jewish believers the death and resurrection of Jesus were but (if the expression be warranted) the first acts of the great drama, which was hastening onward to its immediate close. They had bowed in mysterious wonder before the incongruity of the life and sufferings of Jesus, with the pre-conceived appearance of the "Great One," but expected their present disappointment to be almost instantly compensated by the appalling grandeur of the second coming of Christ. If, besides their descent from Abraham, and their reverence for the law of Moses, faith in Jesus as the Messiah was likewise necessary to secure their title to their peculiar inheritance, yet that faith was speedily to receive its reward; and the original Jewish conception of the Messiah, though put to this severe trial, though its completion was thus postponed, remained in full possession of the mind, and seemed to gather strength and depth of colouring from the constant state of high-wrought agitation in which it kept the whole moral being. This appears to have been the last Jewish illusion, from which the minds of the Apostles themselves were disenchanted; and there can be no doubt both that many of the early Christians almost hourly expected the final dissolution of the world, and that this opinion awed many timid believers into the profession of Christianity, and kept them in trembling subjection to its authority. The ambiguous predictions of Christ himself, in which the destruction of the Jewish Polity, and the ruin of the city and

Belief in
the ap-
proaching
end of the
world.

temple, were shadowed forth under images of more remote and universal import; the language of the Apostles, so liable to misinterpretation, that they were obliged publicly to correct the erroneous conclusions of their hearers (1), seemed to countenance an opinion so disparaging to the real glory of Christianity, which was only to attain its object, till after a slow contest of many centuries, perhaps of ages, with the evil of human nature. Wherever Christianity made its way into a mind deeply impregnated with Judaism, the moral character of the Messiah had still to maintain a strong contest with the temporal; and though experience yearly showed that the commencement of this visible kingdom was but more remote, at least the first generation of Christians passed away, before the majority had attained to more sober expectations; and at every period of more than ordinary religious excitement, a millennial, or at least a reign partaking of a temporal character, has been announced as on the eve of its commencement; the Christian mind has retrograded towards that state of Jewish error, which prevailed about the time of Christ's coming (2).

Hostility
of Judaism
and Chris-
tianity.

As Christianity advanced in all other quarters of the world, its proselytes were in far larger proportion of Gentile than of Jewish descent. The synagogue and the church became more and more distinct, till they stood opposed in irreconcilable hostility. The Jews shrunk back into their stern seclusion, while the Christians were literally spreading in every quarter through the population of the empire. From this total suspension of intercourse, Judaism gradually died away within the Christian pale; time and experience corrected some of the more inveterate prejudices, new elements came into action. The Grecian philosophy, and at a later period influences still more adverse to that of Judaism, mingled with the prevailing Christianity. A kind of latent Judaism has, however, constantly lurked within the bosom of the Church. During the darker ages of Christianity, its sterner spirit harmonizing with the more barbarous state of the Christian mind, led to a frequent and injudicious appeal to the Old Testament: practically the great principle of Judaism, that the law, as emanating from Divine Wisdom, must be of eternal obligation, was admitted by conflicting parties; the books of Moses and the Gospel were appealed to as of equal authority; while the great characteristic of the old religion,

(1) 2 Thessalonians, ii. 1, 2. 2 Peterⁱⁱⁱ. 4. 8.

(2) Compare the strange rabbinical notion of the fertility of the earth during the millennial reign of Christ, given by Irenæus as an actual prophecy of our Lord:—"Venient dies in quibus vineæ nascuntur, singula decem millia palmium habentes, et in una palmitē decem millia brachiorum, et in uno vero brachio dena millia flagellorum, et in unoquoque flagello dena millia botrorum, et in unoquoque botro dena millia acinorum; et unumquoque acinum expressum,

dabit viginti quinque metretas vini; et cum apprehendet aliquis sanctorum botrum, alius claudet, — Botrus ego melior sum, me sume, et per me Dominum benedic." These chapters of Irenæus show the danger to which pure and spiritual Christianity was exposed from this gross and carnal Judaizing spirit. Irenæus (ch. 35.) positively denies that any of these images can be taken in an allegorical sense. De Hæres. v. c. 33.

its exclusiveness, its restriction of the divine blessings within a narrow and visible pale, was too much in accordance both with pride and superstition, not to reassert its ancient dominion. The sacerdotal and the sectarian spirit had an equal tendency to draw a wider or a more narrow line of demarcation around that which, in Jewish language, they pronounced the "Israel" of God, and to substitute some other criterion of Christianity for that exquisite perfection of piety, that sublimity of virtue, in disposition, in thought, and in act, which was the one true test of Christian excellence.

In Palestine, as the external conflict with Judaism was longest and most violent, so the internal influence of the old religion was latest obliterated. But when this separation at length took place, it was even more complete and decided than in any other countries. In Jerusalem, the Christians were perhaps still called, and submitted to be called Nazarenes, while the appellation which had been assumed at Antioch was their common designation in all other parts of the world. The Christian community of Jerusalem, which had taken refuge at Pella bore with them their unabated reverence for the law. But insensibly the power of that reverence decayed; and on the foundation of the new colony of *Ælia*, by the Emperor Hadrian, after the defeat of Barchocab, and the second total demolition of the city, the larger part having nominated a man of Gentile birth, Marcus, as their bishop, settled in the New City, and thus proclaimed their final and total separation from their Jewish ancestors (1). For not only must they have disclaimed all Jewish connection, to be permitted to take up their residence in the new colony, the very approach to which was watched by Roman outposts; and prohibited to every Jew under the severest penalties, but even the old Jewish feelings must have been utterly extinct. For what Jew, even if he had passed under the image of a swine which was erected in mockery over the Bethlehem Gate, would not have shrunk in horror at beholding the Hill of Moriah polluted by a Pagan temple, the worship of heathen deities profaning by their reeking incense, and their idolatrous sacrifices, the site of the Holy of Holies? The Christian absorbed in deeper veneration for the soil which had been hallowed by his Redeemer's footsteps, and was associated with his mysterious death and resurrection, was indifferent to the daily insfingement of the Mosaic law which God himself had annulled by the substitution of the Christian faith, or to the desecration of the site of that temple which God had visibly abandoned.

Mark bishop of Jerusalem.

The rest of the Judæo-Christian community at Pella, and in its neighbourhood, sank into an obscure sect, distinguished by their

(1) Euseb. H. E. iv. 6. Hieronym. Epist. ad Hedebian. Quæst. 8.

obstinate rejection of the writings of St. Paul, and by their own Gospel, most probably the original Hebrew of St. Matthew. But the language, as well as the tenets of the Jews, were either proscribed by the Christians, as they still farther receded from Judaism, or fell into disuse (1); and whatever writings they possessed, whether originals or copies in the vernacular dialect of Palestine, of the genuine Apostolic books, or compilations of their own, entirely perished, so that it is difficult, from the brief notices which are extant, to make out their real nature and character.

In Palestine, as elsewhere, the Jew and the Christian were no longer confounded with each other, but constituted two totally different and implacably hostile races. The Roman government began to discriminate between them, as clearly appears from the permission to the Christians to reside in the New City, on the site of Jerusalem, which was interdicted to the Jews. Mutual hatred was increased by mutual alienation; the Jew, who had lost the power of persecuting, lent himself as a willing instrument to the heathen persecutor against those, whom he still considered as apostates from his religion. The less enlightened Christian added to the contempt of all the Roman world for the Jew a principle of deeper hostility. The language of Tertullian is that of triumph, rather than of commiseration for the degraded state of the Jew (2); strong jealousy of the pomp and power assumed by the patriarch of Tiberias may be trace in the vivid description of Origen (3). No sufferings could too profoundly debase, no pride could become those who shared in the hereditary guilt of the crucifixion of Jesus.

CHAPTER III.

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM.

Relation-
ship be-
tween Ju-
daism and
Christi-
anity.

THE conflict of Christianity with Judaism was a civil war; that with Paganism, the invasion and conquest of a foreign territory. In the former case it was the declared design of the innovation, to perfect the established constitution on its primary principles; to expand the yet undeveloped system, according to the original views of the Divine Legislator; in the latter it contemplated the total subversion of the existing order of things, a reconstruction of the whole moral and religious being of mankind. With the Jew, the abolition of the Temple service, and the abrogation of the Mosaic

(1) Sulpicius Severus, H. E. Mosheim, de Reb. Christ. ante Constant. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiastica.

(2) Dispersi, palabundi, et cœli et soli sui extorres vagantur per orbem, sine nomine, sine

Deo rege, quibus nec advenarum jure terram patriam sultem vestigio salutare conceditur. Lib. cont. Judæos, 15.

(3) Origen. Epist. ad Africanum, Hist of Jews, iii. 136.

Law, were indispensable to the perfect establishment of Christianity. The first was left to be accomplished by the frantic turbulence of the people, and the remorseless vengeance of Rome. Yet, after all, the Temple service maintained its more profound and indelible influence only over the Jew of Palestine; its hold upon the vast numbers which were settled in all parts of the world, was that of remote, occasional, traditionary reverence. With the foreign Jew, the service of the synagogue was his religion; and the synagogue, without any violent change, was transformed into a Christian church. The same Almighty God, to whom it was primarily dedicated, maintained his place; and the sole difference was, that he was worshipped through the mediation of the crucified Jesus of Nazareth. With the Pagan, the whole of his religious observances fell under the unsparing proscription. Every one of the countless temples and shrines, and sacred groves, and hallowed fountains, were to be desecrated by the abhorrent feelings of those who looked back with shame and contempt upon their old idolatries. Every image, from the living work of Phidias or Praxiteles, to the rude and shapeless Hermes or Terminus, was to become an unmeaning mass of wood or stone. In every city, town, or even village, there was a contest to be maintained, not merely against the general system of Polytheism, but against the local and tutelary deity of the place. Every public spectacle, every procession, every civil or military duty, was a religious ceremonial. Though later, when Christianity was in the ascendant, it might expel the deities of Paganism from some of the splendid temples, and convert them to its own use; though insensibly many of the usages of the Heathen worship crept into the more gorgeous and imposing ceremonial of triumphant Christianity; though even many of the vulgar superstitions incorporated themselves with the sacred Christian associations, all this reaction was long subsequent to the permanent establishment of the new religion. At first all was rigid and uncompromising hostility; doubts were entertained by the more scrupulous, whether meat exposed to public sale in the market, but which might have formed part of a sacrifice, would not be dangerously polluting to the Christian. The Apostle, though anxious to correct this sensitive scrupulousness, touches on the point with the utmost caution and delicacy (1).

Direct up-
position
of Chris-
tianity to
Paganism.

The private life of the Jew was already, in part at least, fettered by the minute and almost Brahminical observances, with which the later Rabbins established their despotic authority over the mind. Still some of these usages harmonised with the spirit of Christianity; others were less inveterately rooted in the feelings of the foreign Jew. The trembling apprehension of any thing approach-

(1) 1 Corinth. x. 25—31.

Universal-
ity of Pa-
ganism.

ing to idolatry, the concentration of the heart's whole devotion upon the One Almighty God, prepared the soul for a Christian bias. The great struggle to Jewish feeling was the abandonment of circumcision, as the sign of their covenant with God. But this once over, baptism, the substituted ceremony, was perhaps already familiar to his mind; or, at least, emblematic ablutions were strictly in unison with the genius and the practice of his former religion. Some of the stricter Pharisaic distinctions were local and limited to Palestine, as, for instance, the payment of tithe; since the Temple tribute was the only national tax imposed by his religion on the foreign Jew. Their sectarian symbols, which in Palestine were publicly displayed upon their dress, were of course less frequent in foreign countries; and though worn in secret, might be dropped and abandoned by the convert to Christianity, without exciting observation. The whole life of the Heathen, whether of the philosopher who despised, or the vulgar who were indifferent to, the essential part of the religion, was pervaded by the spirit of Polytheism. It met him in every form, in every quarter, in every act and function of every day's business; not merely in the graver offices of the state, in the civil and military acts of public men; in the senate which commenced its deliberations with sacrifice; in the camp, the centre of which was a consecrated temple: his domestic hearth was guarded by the Penates, or by the ancestral gods of his family or tribe; by land he travelled under the protection of one tutelar divinity, by sea of another; the birth, the bridal, the funeral, had each its presiding deity; the very commonest household utensils and implements were cast in mythological forms; he could scarcely drink without being reminded of making a libation to the gods; and the language itself was impregnated with constant allusions to the popular religion.

However, as a religion, Polytheism was undermined and shaken to the base, yet, as part of the existing order of things, its inert resistance would every where present a strong barrier against the invasion of a foreign faith. The priesthood of an effete religion, as long as the attack is conducted under the decent disguise of philosophical inquiry, or is only aimed at the moral or the speculative part of the faith; as long as the form, of which alone they are become the ministers, is permitted to subsist, go on calmly performing the usual ceremonial: neither their feelings nor their interests are actively alive to the veiled and insidious encroachments which are made upon its power and stability. In the Roman part of the western world, the religion was an integral part of the state: the greatest men of the last days of the Republic, the Ciceros and Cæsars, the Emperors themselves, aspired to fill the pontifical offices, and discharged their duties with grave solemnity, however their declared philosophical opinions were subversive of the whole sys-

tem of Polytheism. Men might disbelieve, deny, even substitute foreign superstitions for the accustomed rites of their country, provided they did not commit any overt act of hostility, or publicly endeavour to bring the ceremonial into contempt. Such acts were not only impieties, they were treason against the majesty of Rome. In the Grecian cities, on the other hand, the interests and the feelings of the magistracy and the priesthood, were less intimately connected; the former, those at least who held the higher authority, being Roman, the latter local or municipal. Though it was the province of the magistrate to protect the established religion, and it was sufficiently the same with his own, to receive his regular worship, yet the strength with which he would resist, or the jealousy with which he would resent any dangerous innovation, would depend on the degree of influence possessed by the sacerdotal body, and the pride or enthusiasm which the people might feel for their local worship. Until, then, Christianity had made such progress as to produce a visible diminution in the attendance on the Pagan worship; until the temples were comparatively deserted, and the offerings less frequent, the opposition encountered by the Christian teacher, or the danger to which he would be exposed, would materially depend on the peculiar religious circumstances of each city (1).

(1) In a former publication the author attempted to represent the manner in which the strength of Polytheism, and its complete incorporation with the public and private life of its votaries, might present itself to the mind of a Christian teacher on his first entrance into a heathen city. The passage has been quoted in Archbishop Whately's book on Rhetoric.

"Conceive then the Apostles of Jesus Christ, the tent-maker or the fisherman, entering as strangers into one of the splendid cities of Syria, Asia Minor, or Greece. Conceive them, I mean, as unendowed with miraculous powers, having adopted their itinerant system of teaching from human motives, and for human purposes alone. As they pass along to the remote and obscure quarter, where they expect to meet with precarious hospitality among their countrymen, they survey the strength of the established religion, which it is their avowed purpose to overthrow. Every where they behold temples, on which the utmost extravagance of expenditure has been lavished by succeeding generations; idols of the most exquisite workmanship, to which, even if the religious feeling of adoration is enfeebled, the people are strongly attached by national or local vanity. They meet processions in which the idle find perpetual occupation, the young excitement, the voluptuous a continual stimulant to their passions. They behold a priesthood numerous, sometimes wealthy; nor are these alone wedded by interest to the established faith; many of the trades, like those of the makers of silver shrines at Ephesus, are pledged to the support of that to which they owe their maintenance. They pass a magnificent theatre, on the splendour and success of which the popularity of the existing authorities mainly depends; and in which the serious exhibitions are essentially religious, the lighter as intimately

connected with the indulgence of the baser passions. They behold another public building, where even worse feelings, the cruel and the sanguinary, are pampered by the animating contests of wild beasts and of gladiators, in which they themselves may shortly play a dreadful part.

Butcher'd to make a Roman holiday!

Show and spectacle are the characteristic enjoyments of a whole people, and every show and spectacle is either sacred to the religious feelings, or incentive to the lusts of the flesh; those feelings which must be entirely eradicated, those lusts which must be brought into total subjection to the law of Christ. They encounter likewise itinerant jugglers, diviners, magicians, who impose upon the credulous to excite the contempt of the enlightened; in the first case, dangerous rivals to those who should attempt to propagate a new faith by imposture and deception: in the latter, naturally tending to prejudice the mind against all miraculous pretensions whatever: here, like Elymas, endeavouring to outdo the signs and wonders of the Apostles, thereby throwing suspicion on all asserted supernatural agency, by the frequency and clumsiness of their delusions. They meet philosophers, frequently itinerant like themselves; or teachers of new religions, priests of Isis and Serapis, who have brought into equal discredit what might otherwise have appeared a proof of philanthropy, the performing laborious journeys at the sacrifice of personal ease and comfort, for the moral and religious improvement of mankind; or at least have so accustomed the public mind to similar pretensions, as to take away every attraction from their boldness or novelty. There are also the teachers of the different mysteries, which would engross all the anxiety of the inquisitive,

The narrative in the Acts, as far as it proceeds, is strikingly in accordance with this state of things. The adventures of the Apostles in the different cities of Asia Minor and Greece are singularly characteristic of the population and the state of the existing Polytheism in each. It was not, till it had extended beyond the borders of Palestine, that Christianity came into direct collision with Paganism. The first Gentile convert, admitted into the Christian community by St. Peter, Cornelius, if not a proselyte to Judaism, approached very nearly to it. He was neither polytheist nor philosopher; he was a worshipper of One Almighty Creator, and familiar, it should seem, with the Jewish belief in angelic appearances. Even beyond the Holy Land, Christianity did not immediately attempt to address the general mass of the Pagan community; its first collisions were casual and accidental; its operations commenced in the synagogue; a separate community was not invariably formed, or, if formed, appeared to the common observation only a new assemblage for Jewish worship; to which, if Heathen proselytes gathered in more than ordinary numbers, it was but the same thing on a larger, which had excited little jealousy on a smaller scale (1).

Christianity in Cyprus.

During the first journey of St. Paul, it is manifest that in Cyprus particularly, and in the towns of Asia Minor, the Jewish worship was an object of general respect: and Christianity appearing as a modification of Jewish belief, shared in that deference which had been long paid to the national religion of the Jewish people. Sergius Paulus (2), the governor of Cyprus, under the influence of the Jew Elymas, was already more than half, if not altogether alienated from the religion of Rome. Barnabas and Paul appeared before him at his own desire; and their manifest superiority over his former teacher easily transformed him from an imperfect proselyte to Judaism into a convert to Christianity.

Antioch in Pisidia.

At Antioch in Pisidia there was a large class of proselytes to Judaism, who espoused the cause of the Christian teachers, and who probably formed the more considerable part of the Gentile hearers, addressed by Paul, on his rejection by the leading Jews of that city.

Lystra.

At Lystra (3), in Lycania, the Apostle appears for the first time, in the centre, as it were, of a Pagan population; and it is remarka-

perhaps excite, even if they did not satisfy, the hopes of the more pure and lofty-minded. Such must have been among the obstacles which must have forced themselves on the calmer moments of the most ardent; such the overpowering difficulties of which it would be impossible to overlook the importance, or elude the force; which required no sober calculation to estimate, no laborious inquiry to discover; which met and confronted them wherever they went, and which, either in desperate presumption, or deliberate reliance on their own preternatural powers, they must have contemned and defied."—Bampton Lectures, p. 269. 273.

(1) The extent to which Jewish proselytism

had been carried, is a most intricate question. From the following passage, quoted from Seneca by St. Augustin, if genuine, it would seem that it had made great progress:—"Cum interim usque eo sceleratissime gentis consuetudo convaluit, ut per omnes terras jure recepta sit, victi victoribus leges dederunt. St. Augustin positively asserts that this sentence does not include the Christians. De Civit. Dei, vi. 11.

(2) Acts, xiii. 6—12.

(3) Acts, xiv. 6—19. There were Jews resident at Lystra, as appears by Acts, xvi. 1. 2. Timothy was the offspring of an intermarriage between a Jewish woman and a Greek: his name is Greek.

ble, that in this wild and inland region, we find the old barbarous religion maintaining a lively and commanding influence over the popular mind. In the more civilised and commercial parts of the Roman world, in Ephesus, in Athens, or in Rome, such extraordinary cures as that of the cripple at Lystra, might have been publicly wrought, and might have excited a wondering interest in the multitude : but it may be doubted, whether the lowest or most ignorant would have had so much faith in the old fabulous appearances of their own deities, as immediately to have imagined their actual and visible appearance in the persons of these surprising strangers. It is only in the remote and savage Lystra, where the Greek language had not predominated over the primitive barbarous dialect (1) (probably a branch of the Cappadocian), that the popular emotion instantly metamorphoses these public benefactors into the Jove and Mercury of their own temples. The inhabitants actually make preparation for sacrifice, and are with difficulty persuaded to consider such wonder-working men to be of the same nature with themselves. Nor is it less characteristic of the versatility of a rude people, that no sooner is the illusion dispelled, than they join with the hostile Jews in the persecution of those very men, whom their superstition, but a short time before, had raised into objects of divine worship.

In the second, and more extensive journey of St. Paul, having parted from Barnabas (2), he was accompanied by Timotheus and Silas or Sylvanus, but of the Asiatic part of this journey, though it led through some countries of remarkable interest in the history of Paganism, no particulars are recorded. Phrygia, which was a kind of link between Greece and the remoter East, still at times sent out into the Western world its troops of frantic Orgiasts; and the Phrygian vied with the Isiac and Mithraic mysteries in its influence in awakening the dormant fanaticism of the Roman world. •It is probable, that, in these regions, the Apostle confined himself to the Jewish settlers and their proselytes. In Galatia, it is clear, that the converts were almost entirely of Hebrew descent. The vision, which invited the Apostle to cross from Troas to Macedonia, led him into a new region, where his countrymen, though forming flourishing communities in many of the principal towns, were not, except perhaps at Corinth, by any means so numerous as in the greater part of Asia Minor. His vessel touched at Samothrace, where the most ancient and remarkable mysteries still retained their sanctity and veneration in that holy and secluded island. At Philippi he first came into collision with those whose interests were concerned in the maintenance of the popular religion. Though these were only indi-

Phrygia.

Galatia.

Philippi.

(1) Jablonski, *Dissertatio de Lingua Lycaonica*, reprinted in Valpy's edition of Stephens's *Thesaurus*.

(2) Acts, xv. 36 to xviii. 18.

viduals, whose gains were at once put an end to by the progress of Christianity, the owners of the female soothsayer of Philippi were part of a numerous and active class, who subsisted on the public credulity. The proseucha, or oratory, of the Jews (the smaller place of worship, which they always established when their community was not sufficiently flourishing to maintain a synagogue), was, as usual, by the water side. The river, as always in Greece and in all southern countries, was the resort of the women of the city, partly for household purposes, partly perhaps for bathing. Many of this sex were in consequence attracted by the Jewish proseucha, and had become, if not proselytes, at least very favourably inclined to Judaism. Among these was Lydia, whose residence was at Thyatira, and who, from her trading in the costly purple dye, may be supposed a person of considerable wealth and influence. Having already been so far enlightened by Judaism as to worship the One God, she became an immediate convert to the Christianity of St. Paul. Perhaps the influence or the example of so many of her own sex, worked upon the mind of a female of a different character and occupation. She may have been an impostor, but more probably was a young girl of excited temperament, whose disordered imagination was employed by men of more artful character for their own sordid purposes. The enthusiasm of this "divining" damsel now took another turn. Impressed with the language and manner of Paul, she suddenly deserted her old employers, and throwing herself into the train of the Apostle, proclaimed, with the same exalted fervour, his divine mission, and the superiority of his religion. Paul, troubled with the publicity, and the continual repetition of her outcries, exorcised her in the name of Jesus Christ. Her wild excitement died away; the spirit passed from her; and her former masters found that she was no longer fit for their service. She could no longer be thrown into those paroxysms of temporary derangement, in which her disordered language was received as oracular of future events. This conversion produced a tumult throughout the city; the interests of a powerful body were at stake, for the trade of soothsaying, at this time, was both common and lucrative. The employers of the prophetess enflamed the multitude. The Apostle and his attendants were seized, arraigned before the magistrates, as introducing an *unlawful* religion. The magistrates took part against them. They suffered the ordinary punishment of disturbers of the peace; were scourged and cast into prison. While their hymn, perhaps their evening hymn, was heard through the prison, a violent earthquake shook the whole building; the doors flew open, and the fetters, by which probably they were chained to the walls, were loosened. The affrighted jailor, who was responsible for their appearance, expected them to avail themselves of this opportunity of escape, and in his despair was about to commit suicide. His hand

was arrested by the calm voice of Paul, and to his wonder he found the prisoners remaining quietly in their cells. His fears and his admiration wrought together; and the jailor of Philippi, with his whole family, embraced the Christian faith. The magistrates, when they found that Paul had the privilege of Roman citizenship, were in their turn alarmed at their hasty infringement of that sacred right, released them honourably from the prison, and were glad to prevail upon them to depart peacefully from the city. Thus, then, we have already seen Christianity in collision with Polytheism, under two of its various forms: at Lystra, as still the old poetic faith of a barbarous people, insensible to the progress made elsewhere in the human mind, and devoutly believing the wonders of their native religion; in Philippi, a provincial town in a more cultivated part of Greece, but still at no high state of intellectual advancement, as connected with the vulgar arts, not of the established priesthood, but of itinerant traders in popular superstition. In Athens Paganism has a totally different character, inquiring, argumentative, sceptical, Polytheism in form, and that form embodying all that could excite the imagination of a highly polished people; in reality admitting and delighting in the freest discussion, altogether inconsistent with sincere belief in the ancient and established religion.

Contrast
of Poly-
theism at
Lystra,
Philippi,
and
Athens.

Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, Paul and his companions arrived at Thessalonica; but in this city, as well as in Berea, their chief intercourse appears to have been with the Jews. The riot by which they were expelled from Thessalonica, though blindly kept up by the disorderly populace, was instigated by Jason the chief of the Jewish community. Having left his companions, Timotheus and Silas, at Berea, Paul arrived alone at Athens.

Thessalo-
nica.

At Athens, the centre at once and capital of the Greek philosophy and Heathen superstition, takes place the first public and direct conflict between Christianity and Paganism. Up to this time there is no account of any one of the Apostles taking his station in the public street or market-place, and addressing the general multitude (1). Their place of teaching had invariably been the synagogue of their nation, or, as at Philippi, the neighbourhood of their customary place of worship. Here, however, Paul does not confine himself to the synagogue, or to the society of his countrymen and their proselytes. He takes his stand in the public market-place (probably not the Ceramicus, but the Eretriac Forum) (2) which, in the reign of Augustus, had begun to be more frequented, and at the top of which was the famous portico, from which the Stoics assumed their name. In Athens, the appearance of a new public teacher, instead of offending the popular feelings, was too familiar to excite astonishment,

Athens.

(1) This appears to be intimated in the expression, Acts, xvii. 16. "His spirit was stirred within him when he saw the city, wholly given to idolatry."

(2) Strabo, x. 447.

and was rather welcomed, as promising some fresh intellectual excitement. In Athens, hospitable to all religions and all opinions. the foreign and Asiatic appearance, and possibly the less polished tone and dialect of Paul, would only awaken the stronger curiosity. Though they affect at first (probably the philosophic part of his hearers), to treat him as an idle "babbler," and others (the vulgar, alarmed for the honour of their deities) supposed that he was about to introduce some new religious worship, which might endanger the supremacy of their own tutelar divinities; he is conveyed, not without respect, to a still more public and commodious place, from whence he may explain his doctrines to a numerous assembly without disturbance. On the Areopagus (1), the Christian leader takes his stand, surrounded on every side with whatever was noble, beautiful, and intellectual in the older world, temples, of which the materials were only surpassed by the architectural grace and majesty; statues, in which the ideal Anthropomorphism of the Greeks had almost elevated the popular notions of the Deity, by embodying it in human forms of such exquisite perfection; public edifices, where the civil interests of man had been discussed with the acuteness and versatility of the highest Grecian intellect, in all the purity of the inimitable Attic dialect, where oratory had obtained its highest triumphs by "wielding at will the fierce democracy;" the walks of the philosophers, who unquestionably, by elevating the human mind to an appetite for new and nobler knowledge, had prepared the way for a loftier and purer religion. It was in the midst of these elevating associations, to which the student of Grecian literature in Tarsus, the reader of Menander, and of the Greek philosophical poets, could scarcely be entirely dead or ignorant, that Paul stands forth to proclaim the lowly yet authoritative religion of Jesus of Nazareth. His audience was chiefly formed from the two prevailing sects, the Stoics and Epicureans, with the populace, the worshippers of the established religion. In his discourse, the heads of which are related by St. Luke, Paul, with singular felicity, touches on the peculiar opinions of each class among his hearers (2); he expands the popular religion into a higher philosophy; he imbues philosophy with a profound sentiment of religion (3).

It is impossible not to examine with the utmost interest the whole course of this, (if we consider its remote consequences, and suppose it the first full and public argument of Christianity against the

Paul on
the Areo-
pagus.

Speech of
Paul.

(1) It has been supposed by some that Paul was summoned before the Court of the Areopagus, who took cognizance of causes relating to religion. But there is no indication, in the narrative, of any of the forms of a judicial proceeding.

(2) Paulus summā arte orationem suam temperat, ut modo cum vulgo contra philosophos, modo cum philosophis contra plebem, modo contra utroque pugnet. Rosenmüller in loco

(3) The art and propriety of this speech is considerably marred by the mistranslation of a word in our version, *θεσις ἀμυνεστικῆς*,—which does not imply reproof, as in the rendering "so superstitious." Conciliation, not offence, of the public feeling, especially at the opening of a speech, is the first principle of all oratory, more particularly of Christian teaching

heathen religion and philosophy,) perhaps the most extensively and permanently effective oration ever uttered by man. We may contemplate Paul as the representative of Christianity, in the presence, as it were, of the concentrated religion of Greece; and of the spirits, if we may so speak, of Socrates, and Plato, and Zeno. The opening of the apostle's speech is according to those most perfect rules of art which are but the expressions of the general sentiments of nature. It is calm, temperate, conciliatory. It is no fierce denunciation of idolatry, no contemptuous disdain of the prevalent philosophic opinions; it has nothing of the sternness of the ancient Jewish prophet, nor the taunting defiance of the later Christian polemic. "Already the religious people of Athens had, unknowingly indeed, worshipped the universal deity, for they had an altar to the Unknown God (1). The nature, the attributes of this sublimer being, hitherto adored in ignorant and unintelligent homage, he came to unfold. This God rose far above the popular notion; he could not be confined in altar or temple, or represented by any visible image. He was the universal father of mankind, even of the earth-born Athenians, who boasted that they were of an older race than the other families of man, and coeval with the world itself. He was the fountain of life, which pervaded and sustained the universe; he had assigned their separate dwellings to the separate families of man." Up to a certain point in this higher view of the Supreme Being, the philosopher of the Garden, as well as of the Porch, might listen with wonder and admiration. It soared, indeed, high above the vulgar religion: but in the lofty and serene Deity, who disdained to dwell in the earthly temple, and needed nothing from the hand of man (2), the Epicurean might almost suppose that he heard the language of his own teacher. But the next sentence, which asserted the providence of God as the active, creative energy, — as the conservative, the ruling, the ordaining principle, — annihilated at once the atomic theory, and the government of blind chance, to which Epicurus ascribed the origin and preservation of the universe, "This high and impassive deity, who dwelt aloof in serene and majestic superiority to all want, was perceptible in some mysterious manner by man: his all pervading providence comprehended the whole human race; man was in constant union with the Deity, as an offspring with its parent." And still the Stoic might applaud with complacent satisfaction the ardent words of the Apostle; he might approve the lofty condemnation of idolatry. "We, thus of divine descent, ought to think more nobly of our universal Father than to suppose that the Godhead is like unto

(1) Of all the conjectures (for all is purely conjectural,) on the contested point of the "altar to the Unknown God," the most ingenious and natural, in our opinion, is that of Eichhorn. There were, he supposes, very ancient altars, older perhaps than the art of writing, or on which the

inscription had been effaced by time; on these the piety of later ages had engraven the simple words, "To the Unknown God."

(2) Needing nothing: the coincidence with the "nihil indiga nostri" of Lucretius is curious: even if accidental.

gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art or man's device." But this divine Providence was far different from the stern and all-controlling Necessity, the inexorable Fatalism of the Stoic system. While the moral value of human action was recognised by the solemn retributive judgment to be passed on all mankind, the dignity of Stoic virtue was lowered by the general demand of repentance. The perfect man, the moral king, was deposed, as it were, and abased to the general level; he had to learn new lessons in the school of Christ; lessons of humility and conscious deficiency, the most directly opposed to the principles and the sentiments of his philosophy.

The great Christian doctrine of the resurrection closed the speech of Paul; a doctrine received with mockery, perhaps by his Epicurean hearers, with suspension of judgment, probably, by the Stoic, with whose theory of the final destruction of the world by fire, and his tenet of future retribution, it might appear in some degree to harmonise. Some, however, became declared converts; among whom are particularly named Dionysius, a man of sufficient distinction to be a member of the famous court of the Areopagus, and a woman, named Damaris, probably of considerable rank and influence.

At Athens, all this free discussion on topics relating to the religious and moral nature of man, and involving the authority of the existing religion, passed away without disturbance. The jealous reverence for the established faith, which, conspiring with its perpetual ally, political faction, had in former times caused the death of Socrates, the exile of Stilpo, and the proscription of Diogenes the Melian, had long died away. With the loss of independence, political animosities had subsided, and the toleration of philosophical and religious indifference allowed the utmost latitude to speculative inquiry, however ultimately dangerous to the whole fabric of the national religion. Yet Polytheism still reigned in Athens in its utmost splendour: the temples were maintained with the highest pomp; the Eleusinian Mysteries, in which religion and philosophy had in some degree coalesced, attracted the noblest and the wisest of the Romans, who boasted of their initiation in these sublime secrets. Athens was thus, at once, the head-quarters of Paganism, and at the same time the place where Paganism most clearly betrayed its approaching dissolution.

From Athens, the Apostle passes to Corinth. Corinth was at this time the common emporium of the eastern and western divisions of the Roman Empire. It was the Venice of the Old World, in whose streets the continued stream of commerce, either flowing from, or towards the great capital of the world, out of all the eastern territories, met and crossed (1). The basis of the population of

Corinth,
A. D. 52.

(1) After its destruction by Mummius, Corinth was restored, beautified, and colonised by Julius

Corinth was Roman, of very recent settlement; but colonists from all quarters had taken up their permanent residence in a place so admirably adapted for mercantile purposes. In no part of the Roman empire were both the inhabitants and the travellers through the city so various and mingled; no where, therefore, would a new religion, at the same time spread with so much rapidity, and send out the ramifications of its influence with so much success; and at the same time excite so little observation amid the stir of business and the perpetual influx and afflux of strangers, or be less exposed to jealous opposition. Even the priesthood, newly settled, like the rest of the colony, could command no ancient reverence; and in the perpetual mingling and confusion of all dresses and dialects, no doubt there was the same concourse of religious itinerants of every description (1). At Corinth, therefore, but for the hostility of his countrymen, the Christian Apostle might, even longer than the eighteen months which he passed in that city, have preserved his peaceful course. The separation which at once took place between the Jewish and the Christian communities in Corinth—the secession of Paul from the synagogue into a neighbouring house,—might have allayed even this intestine ferment, had not the progress of Christianity, and the open adoption of the new faith by one of the chiefs of the synagogue, reawakened that fierce animosity which had already caused the expulsion of both parties from Rome, and the seeds of which no doubt rankled in the hearts of many. Here, therefore, for the first time, Christianity was brought under the cognisance of a higher authority than the municipal magistrate of one of the Macedonian cities. The contemptuous dismissal of the cause by the Proconsul of Achaia, as beneath the majesty of the Roman tribunal; his refusal to interfere, when some of the populace, with whom the Christians were apparently the favoured party, on the repulse of the accusing Jews from the seat of justice, fell upon one of them, named Sosthenes, and maltreated him with con-

Gallio,
A. D. 53.

Cæsar.—Strabo, viii. 381. For its history, wealth, and commercial situation, Diod. Sic. Fragm. The profligacy of Corinthian manners was likewise proverbial:—*πύλιν οἰκίαις τῶν εὐσῶν τε καὶ γυγνυμένων ἱσπαροδιτοτάτην*. Dio. Chrysost. Orat. 37. v. ii. p. 110.

(1) Corinth was a favourite resort of the Sophists (Aristid. Isthm. Athenæus, l. xlii.), and in an oration of Dio Chrysostom there is a lively and graphic description of what may be called one of the fairs of antiquity, the Isthmian games, which happily illustrates the general appearance of society. Among the rest, the Cynic philosopher, Diogenes, appears, and endeavours to attract an audience among the vast and idle multitude. He complains, however, “that if he were a travelling dentist or an oculist, or had any infallible remedy for the spleen or the gout, all who were afflicted with such diseases would have thronged around him; but as he only professed to cure mankind of vice, ignorance, and profligacy, no one troubled himself to seek a

remedy for those less grievous maladies.” “And there was around the Temple of Neptune a crowd of miserable Sophists, shouting and abusing one another; and of their so called disciples, fighting with each other; and many authors reading their works, to which nobody paid any attention; and many poets, chaunting their poems, with others praising them; and many jugglers, showing off their tricks; and many prodigy-mongers noting down their wonders; and a thousand rhetoricians perplexing causes; and not a few shopkeepers retailing their wares wherever they could find a customer. And presently some approached the philosopher,—not indeed the Corinthians; for as they saw him every day in Corinth, they did not expect to derive any advantage from hearing him,—but those that drew near him were strangers, each of whom having listened a short time, and asked a few questions, made his retreat, from fear of his rebukes.” Dio. Chrys. Orat. viii.

siderable violence, shows how little even the most enlightened men yet comprehended the real nature of the new religion. The affair was openly treated as an unimportant sectarian dispute about the national faith of the Jews. The mild (1) and popular character of Gallio, his connection with his brother Seneca (2), in whose philosophic writings the morality of Heathenism had taken a higher tone than it ever assumes, unless perhaps, subsequently, in the works of Marcus Antoninus, excite regret that the religion of Christ was not brought under his observation in a manner more likely to conflict his attention. The result of this trial was the peaceful establishment of Christianity in Corinth, where, though secure from the violence of the Jews, it was however constantly exposed, by its situation, to the intrusion of new comers, with different modifications of Christian opinions. This, therefore, was the first Christian community which was rent into parties, and in which the authority of the Apostle was perpetually wanting to correct opinions not purely Jewish in their origin.

Thus eventful was the second journey of Paul: over so wide a circuit had Christianity already been disseminated, almost entirely by his personal exertions. In many of the most flourishing and populous cities of Greece communities were formed, which were continually enlarging their sphere.

Ephesus,
A. D. 54.

The third journey (3), starting from the head-quarters of Christianity, Antioch, led Paul again through the same regions of Asia, Galatia, and Phrygia. But now, instead of crossing over into Macedonia, he proceeded along the west of Asia Minor, to the important city of Ephesus. Ephesus (4), at this time, may be considered the capital, the chief mercantile city, of Asia Minor. It was inhabited by a mingled population; and, probably, united, more than any city, in the East, Grecian and Asiatic habits, manners, and superstitions (5). Its celebrated temple was one of the most splendid models of Grecian architecture; the image of the goddess retained the symbolic form of the old Eastern nature worship. It was one of the great schools of magic; the Ephesian amulets, or talismans (6), were in high request. Polytheism had thus effected an amicable union of Grecian art with Asiatic mysticism and magical superstition: the venter of the silver shrines, which represented the great Temple, one of the wonders of the world, vied with the trader in charms and in all the appurtenances of witchcraft. Great numbers of Jews had long inhabited the chief cities of Asia Minor; many had

(1) *Nemo mortalium uni tam dulcis est quam hic omnibus.* Senec. Nat. Quest. 4. *Præf. Hoc plusquam Senecam dedisse mundo. Et dulcem generasse Gallionem.* Stat. Sylv. ii. 7. Compare Dion. Cass. ix.

(2) Among the later forgeries was a correspondence between Seneca and St. Paul: and many Christian writers, as unacquainted with the history of their own religion as with the

state of the heathen mind, have been anxious to trace all that is striking and beautiful in the writings of the Stoic to Christian influence.

(3) Acts, xviii. 23. to xxi. 3.

(4) Rosenmüller, *das alte und neue Morgenland*, 6.-50.

(5) Compare Matter, *Hist. du Gnosticisme*, i. 137.

(6) *Ερσία γάρματα.*

attained to opulence, and were of great mercantile importance. Augustus had issued a general rescript to the cities of Asia Minor for the protection of the Jews, securing to them the freedom of religious worship; legalising the transmission of the Temple tribute to Jerusalem by their own appointed receivers; and making the plunder of their synagogues sacrilege (1). Two later edicts of Agrippa and Julius Antonius, proconsuls, particularly addressed to the magistracy of Ephesus, acknowledged and confirmed the imperial decree. From this period, nothing can yet have occurred to lessen their growing prosperity, or to lower them in the estimation of their Gentile neighbours. Among the numerous Jews in this great city, Paul found some, who having been in Judæa during the teaching of John the Baptist, had embraced his opinions, and received baptism, either at his hands or from his disciples, but appear not only not to have visited the mother country, but to have kept up so little connection with it, as to be almost, if not entirely, ignorant of the promulgation of Christianity. The most eminent of them, Apollos, had left the city for Corinth, where meeting with St. Paul's companions, the Roman Jews, Priscilla and Aquila, he had embraced Christianity, and being a man of eloquence, immediately took such a lead in the community, as to be set up by one of the conflicting parties as a kind of rival of the Apostle. The rest of this sect in Ephesus willingly listened to the teaching of Paul: to the number of twelve, they "received the Holy Ghost," and thus became the nucleus of a new Christian community in Ephesus. The followers of John the Baptist, no doubt, conformed in all respects with the customary worship of their countrymen: their peculiar opinions were superinduced, at it were, upon their Judaism; they were still regular members of the synagogue. In the synagogue therefore Paul commenced his labours, the success of which was so great as evidently to excite the hostility of the leading Jews: hence, here likewise, a complete separation took place; the Apostle obtained possession of a school belonging to a person named Tyrannus, most likely a Grecian sophist, and the Christian church stood alone, as a distinct and independent place of divine worship.

Disciples
of John
the Bap-
tist

Paul continued to reside in Ephesus two years, during which the rapid extension of Christianity was accelerated by many wonderful cures. In Ephesus, such cures were likely to be sought with avidity; but in this centre of magical superstition would by no means command belief in the divine mission of the worker of miracles; Jews, as well as Heathens, admitted the unlimited power of supernatural agencies, and vied with each other in the success of their rival enchantments. The question then would arise, by what more than usually potent charm, or mysterious power, such extra-

Ephesian
magic.

(1) Ἰερόσυλα, Joseph. Ant. xvi. 6. Krebs *Decreta Romanorum pro Judæis*. Lipsiæ, 1778.

Jewish
exorcists.

ordinary works were wrought. The followers of both religions had implicit faith in the magic influence of certain names. With the Jews, this belief was moulded up with their most sacred traditions. It was by the holy Tetra Grammaton (1), the Sem-hamphorash, according to the Alexandrian historian of the Jews, that Moses and their gifted ancestors wrought all the wonders of their early history. Pharaoh trembled before it, and the plagues of Egypt had been obedient to the utterance of the awful monosyllable, the ineffable name of the Deity. Cabbalism, which assigned at first sanctity, and afterwards power over the intermediate spirits of good and evil, to certain combinations of letters and numbers, though not yet cultivated to its height, existed, no doubt, in its earlier elements, among the Jews of this period. Upon this principle, some of the Jews who practised exorcism attributed all these prodigies of St. Paul to some secret power possessed by the name of Jesus. Among these were some men of high rank, the sons of one of the high priests, named Sceva. They seem to have believed in the superstition by which they ruled the minds of others, and supposed that the talismanic influence, which probably depended on cabbalistic art, was inseparably connected with the pronunciation of this mystic name. Those whom this science or this trade of exorcism (according as it was practised by the credulous or the crafty) employed for their purposes, were those unhappy beings of disordered imagination, possessed, according to the belief of the times, by evil spirits. One of these, on whom they were trying this experiment, had probably before been strongly impressed with the teaching of Paul, and the religion which he preached; and irritated by the interference of persons whom he might know to be hostile to the Christian party, assaulted them with great violence, and drove them naked and wounded out of the house (2).

This extraordinary event was not only fatal to the pretensions of the Jewish exorcists, but at once seemed to put to shame all who believed and who practised magical arts, and the manufacturers of spells and talismans. Multitudes came forward, and voluntarily gave up, to be burned, not only all their store of amulets, but even the books which contained the magical formularies. Their value, as probably they were rated and estimated at a high price, amounted to 50,000 pieces of silver, most likely, Attic drachms, or Roman silver denarii, a coin very current in Asia Minor, and worth about 7½*d.* of our money. The sum would thus make something more than 1600*l.*

(1) Ariapanus apud Euseb. Præp. Evangel. viii. 28. Compare Clemens. Alex. Strom. v. p. 562. It is curious enough that the constant repetition of the mysterious name of the Deity, Oum, should be the most acceptable act of devotion

among the Indians, among the Jews the most awful and inexpiable impiety.

(2) It is not improbable that they may have taken off their ordinary dress for the purpose of performing their incantation with greater solemnity.

These superstitions, however, though domiciliated at Ephesus, were foreign; and, perhaps, according to the Roman provincial regulations, unlawful. Yet, even the established religion, at least some of those dependent upon it for their subsistence, began to tremble at the rapid increase of the new faith. A collision now, for the first time, took place with the interests of that numerous class who were directly connected with the support of the reigning Polytheism. The Temple of Ephesus, as one of the wonders of the world, was constantly visited by strangers; a few, perhaps, from religion, many from curiosity or admiration of the unrivalled architecture; at all events, by the greater number of those who were always passing, accidentally, or with mercantile views, through one of the most celebrated marts of the East. There was a common article of trade, a model or shrine of silver representing the temple, which was preserved as a memorial, or, perhaps, as endowed with some sacred and talismanic power. The sale of these works gradually fell off and the artisans, at the instigation of a certain Demetrius, raised a violent popular tumult, and spread the exciting watchword that the worship of Diana was in danger. The whole city rung with the repeated outcries, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." Two of Paul's companions were seized and dragged into the public theatre, the place where in many cities the public business was transacted. Paul was eager to address the multitude, but was restrained by the prudence of his friends, among whom were some of the most eminent men of the province, the Asiarchs (1). The Jews appear to have been implicated in the insurrection; and, probably, to exculpate themselves, and disclaim all connection with the Christians, they put forward a certain Alexander, a man of eloquence and authority. The appearance of Alexander seems not to have produced the effect that they intended: as a Jew, he was considered hostile to the Polytheistic worship; his voice was drowned by the turbulence, and for two hours nothing could be heard in the assembly but the reiterated clamour, "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The conduct of the magistrates seems to indicate that they were acting against a part of the community, in whose favour the imperial edicts were still in force. Either they did not yet clearly distinguish between the Jews and Christians, or supposed that the latter, as originally Jews, were under the protection of the same rescripts. Expressing the utmost reverence for the established religion of Diana, they recommend moderation; exculpate the accused from the charge of intentional insult, either against the temple or the religion of the city; require that the cause should be heard in a

Demetrius, the maker of silver shrines, A. D. 57.

(1) This office appears to have been a wreck of the ancient federal constitution of the Asiatic cities. The Asiarchs were elective, by certain cities, and represented the general league or confederation. They possessed the supreme sacerdo-

tal authority; regulated and presided in the theatrical exhibitions. Their pontifical character renders it more remarkable that they should have been favourably disposed towards Paul.

legal form; and, finally, urge the danger which the city incurred of being punished for the breach of the public peace by the higher authorities,—the proconsular governor of Asia. The tumult was allayed; but Paul seems to have thought it prudent to withdraw from the excited city, and to pursue his former line of travel into Macedonia and Greece.

From Ephesus, accordingly, we trace his course through Macedonia to Corinth. Great changes had probably taken place in this community. The exiles from Rome, when the first violence of the edict of Claudius had passed away, both Jews and Christians, quietly stole back to their usual residences in the metropolis. In writing his epistle to the Roman Christians from this place, Paul seems to intimate both that the religion was again peaceably and firmly established in Rome (it counted some of the imperial household among its converts); and, likewise, that he was addressing many individuals with whom he was personally acquainted. As then, it is quite clear, from the early history, that he had not himself travelled so far as Italy, Corinth seems the only place where he can have formed these connections.

A. D. 58. His return led him, from fear of his hostile countrymen, back through Macedonia to Troas; thence, taking ship at Assos, he visited the principal island of the *Ægean* Mitylene, Chios, and Samos; landed at Miletus, where he had an interview with the heads of the Ephesian community; thence, by sea, touching at Coos, Rhodes, and Patara, to Tyre. Few incidents occur during this long voyage: the solemn and affecting parting from the Ephesian Christians, who came to meet him at Miletus, implies a profound sense of the dangers which awaited him on his return to Palestine. The events which occurred during his journey, and his residence in Jerusalem, have been already related. This last collision with his native Judaism, and his imprisonment, occupy between two and three years (1).

A. D. 61. The next place in which the Apostle surveyed the strength, and encountered the hostility of Paganism was in the metropolis of the world. Released from his imprisonment at Cæsarea, the Christian Apostle was sent to answer for his conduct in Jerusalem before the imperial tribunal, to which, as a Roman citizen, he had claimed his right of appeal. His voyage is singularly descriptive of the precarious navigation of the *Mediterranean* at that time; and it is curious that in the wild island of Melita, the Apostle having been looked upon as an atrocious criminal, because a viper had fastened upon his hand; when he shook the reptile off, without having received any injury, was admired as a god. In the barbarous Melita, as in the barbarous Lystra, the belief in gods under the human form had

(1) For the period between the year 58 and 61, see the last chapter.

not yet given place to the incredulous spirit of the age. He arrives at length, at the port in Italy, where voyagers from Syria or Egypt usually disembarked, Puteoly. There appears to have been Christians in that town, who received Paul, and with whom he resided for seven days. Many of the Roman Christians, apprised of his arrival, went out to meet him as far the village of Appii Forum, or a place called the Three Taverns. But it is remarkable that so complete by this time was the separation between the Jewish and Christian communities, that the former had no intelligence of his arrival, and what is more singular, knew nothing whatever of his case (1). Possibly the usual correspondence with Jerusalem had been interrupted at the time of the expulsion of the Jews from Rome, and had not been re-established with its former regularity; or, as is more probable, the persecution of Paul being a party and Sadducaic measure, was neither avowed nor supported by the great body of the nation. Those who had visited, and returned from, Jerusalem, being chiefly of the Pharisaic or more religious party, were either ignorant or imperfectly informed of the extraordinary adventures of Paul in their native city: and two years had elapsed during his confinement at Cæsarea. Though still in form a prisoner, Paul enjoyed almost perfect freedom, and his first step was a general appeal to the whole community of the Jews then resident in Rome. To them he explained the cause of his arrival. It was not uncommon in disputes between two parties in Jerusalem, that both should be summoned or sent at once by the governor, especially if, like Paul, they demanded it as a right, to plead their cause before the imperial courts. More than once the High Priest himself had been reduced to the degrading situation of a criminal before a higher tribunal; and there are several instances in which all the arts of court intrigue were employed to obtain a decision on some question of Jewish politics. Paul, while he acknowledges that his conflict with his countrymen related to his belief in Christ, as the Messiah disclaims all intention of arraigning the ruling authorities for their injustice: he had no charge to advance against the nation. The Jews, in general, seem to have been inclined to hear from so high an authority the real doctrines of the Gospel. They assembled for that purpose at the house in which the Apostle was confined; and, as usual, some were favourably disposed to the Christianity of Paul, others rejected it with the most confirmed obduracy.

But, at this instant, we pass at once from the firm and solid ground of authentic and credible history, upon the quaking and insecure footing of legendary tradition. A few scattered notices of the personal history of Paul may be gathered from the later epistles; but the last fact which we receive from the undoubted autho-

A. D. 63.
St. Paul
leaves
Rome.

(1) Acts, xxviii. 21.

rity of the writer of the Acts is, that two years passed before the Apostle left Rome (1). To what examination he was subjected, in what manner his release was obtained, all is obscure, or rather without one ray of light. But to the success of Paul in Rome, and to the rapid progress of Christianity during these two eventful years, we have gloomy and melancholy evidence. The next year after his departure is darkly noted in the annals of Rome as the era of that fatal fire which enveloped in ruin all the ancient grandeur of the Eternal City ;—in those of Christianity, as the epoch of the first heathen persecution. This event throws considerable light on the state of the Christian church at Rome. No secret or very inconsiderable community would have attracted the notice, or satisfied the blood-thirsty cruelty of Nero. The people would not have consented to receive as atoning victims for the dreadful disaster of the great conflagration, nor would the reckless tyranny of the emperor have condescended to select them as sacrificial offerings to appease the popular fury, unless they had been numerous, far above contempt, and already looked upon with a jealous eye. Nor is it less clear, that even to the blind discernment of popular indignation and imperial cruelty, the Christians were by this time distinguished from the Jews. They were no longer a mere sect of the parent nation, but a separate, a marked, and peculiar people, known by their distinctive usages, and incorporating many of Gentile descent into their original Jewish community.

Though at first there appears something unaccountable in this proscription of a harmless and unobtrusive sect, against whom the worst charge, at last, was the introduction of a new and peaceful form of worshipping one Deity, a privilege which the Jew had always enjoyed without molestation ; yet the process by which the public mind was led to this outburst of fury, and the manner in which it was directed against the Christians, is clearly indicated by the historian (2). After the first consternation and distress, an access of awe-struck superstition seized on the popular mind. Great public calamities can never be referred to obvious or accidental causes. The trembling people had recourse to religious rites, endeavoured to ascertain by what offended deities this dreadful judgment had been inflicted, and sought for victims to appease their yet perhaps unmitigated gods (3). But when superstition has once found out victims, to whose guilt or impiety it may ascribe the divine anger, human revenge mingles itself up

A. D. 64.
Burning
of Rome.

(1) Whatever might be the reason for the abrupt termination of the book of the Acts, which could neither be the death of the author, for he probably survived St. Paul, nor his total separation from him, for he was with him towards the close of his career (2 Tim. iv. 11.), the expression in the last verse but one of the Acts limits the residence of St. Paul in Rome, at that time, to two years.

(2) *Mox petita diis piacula, aditque Sibyllæ libri, ex quibus supplicaturn Vulcano et Cereri Proserpineque, ac propitiata Juno per matronas, primum in Capitolio, deinde apud proximum mare, etc.* Tac. Ann. xv. 44.

(3) *Sed non ope humanâ, non largitionibus principis, aut deum placamentis decedebat infamia, quin jussum incendium crederetur.*

with the relentless determination to propitiate offended Heaven, and contributes still more to blind the judgment and exasperate the passions. The other foreign religions, at which the native deities might take offence, had been long domiciliated in Rome. Christianity was the newest, perhaps was making the most alarming progress : it was no national religion ; it was disclaimed with eager animosity by the Jews, among whom it originated ; its principles and practices were obscure and unintelligible ; and that obscurity the excited imagination of the hostile people might fill up with the darkest and most monstrous forms.

We have sometimes thought it possible that incautious or misinterpreted expressions of the Christians themselves might have attracted the blind resentment of the people. The minds of the Christians were constantly occupied with the terrific images of the final coming of the Lord to judgment in fire ; the conflagration of the world was the expected consummation, which they devoutly supposed to be instantly at hand. When, therefore, they saw the great metropolis of the world, the city of pride, of sensuality, of idolatry, of bloodshed, blazing like a fiery furnace before their eyes,—the Babylon of the West wrapped in one vast sheet of destroying flame,—the more fanatical—the *Jewish* part of the community (1)—may have looked on with something of fierce hope, and eager anticipation ; expressions almost triumphant may have burst from unguarded lips. They may have attributed the ruin to the righteous vengeance of the Lord ; it may have seemed the opening of that kingdom which was to commence with the discomfiture, the desolation, of heathenism, and to conclude with the establishment of the millennial kingdom of Christ. Some of these, in the first instance, apprehended and examined, may have made acknowledgments before a passionate and astonished tribunal, which would lead to the conclusion that, in the hour of general destruction, they had some trust, some security, denied to the rest of mankind ; and this exemption from common misery, if it would not mark them out in some dark manner (2), as the authors of the conflagration, at all events would convict them of that hatred of the human race so often advanced against the Jews.

Probable causes which implicated the Christians with this event.

Inventive cruelty sought out new ways of torturing these victims of popular hatred and imperial injustice. The calm and serene patience with which they were armed by their religion against the most excruciating sufferings, may have irritated still further their ruthless persecutors. The sowing up men in the skins of beasts, and setting dogs to tear them to pieces, may find precedent in the annals

—(1) Some deep and permanent cause of hatred against the Christians, it may almost seem, as connected with this disaster, can alone account for the strong expressions of Tacitus, writing so

many years after : — *Sentes et novissima exempla meritos.*

(2) *Haud perinde in crimine incendii quam odio generis humani convicti sunt.*

of human barbarity (1); but the covering them over with a kind of dress smeared with wax, pitch, or other combustible matter, with a stake under the chin, to keep them upright, and then placing them to be slowly consumed, like torches in the public gardens of popular amusement,—this seems to have been an invention of the time; and, from the manner in which it is mentioned by the Roman writers, as the most horrible torture known, appears to have made a profound impression on the general mind. Even a people habituated to gladiatorial shows and to the horrible scenes of wholesale execution which were of daily occurrence during the reigns of Tiberius, Caligula, and Nero, must yet have been in an unusual state of exasperated excitement to endure, or rather to take pleasure, in the sight of these unparalleled barbarities. Thus, the gentle, the peaceful religion of Christ, was welcomed upon earth by new applications of man's inventive faculties, to inflict suffering, and to satiate revenge (2).

The Apostle was, no doubt, absent from Rome at the commencement, and during the whole, of this persecution. His course is dimly described by the hints scattered through his later epistles. It is probable that he travelled into Spain. The assertion of Irenæus, that he penetrated to the extreme West (3) coincides with his intention of visiting that province declared at an earlier period. As it is difficult to assign to any other part of his life the establishment of Christianity in Crete, it may be permitted to suppose, that from Spain his course lay eastward, not improbably with the design of revisiting Jerusalem. That he entertained this design, there appears some evidence; none, however, that he accomplished it (4). The state of Judæa, in which Roman oppression had now begun, under Albinus, if not under Florus (5), to grow to an intolerable height; the spirit of indignant resistance which was fermenting in the mind

(1) Et percussibus addita ludibria, ut ferarum tergis oblecti, laniatu canum interirent; aut crucibz affixi, aut flammandi, atque ubi defecisset dies, in usum nocturni luminis urerentur. Tac. Ann. xv. 54. Juvenal calls this "tunica molesta," viii. 235.

tandâ lucebis in illâ
Qua stantes ardent, qui fixo cultore fumant
Et latum mediâ sulcum deducti arenâ.—1 156.

Illam tunicam alimentis ignitam illitam et intexam.—Senec. Epist. xix. It was probably thought appropriate to consume with slow fire the authors of the conflagration.

(2) Gibbon's extraordinary "conjecture" that the Christians in Rome were confounded with the Galileans, the fanatical followers of Judas the Gaulonite, is most improbable. The sect of Judas was not known beyond the precincts of Palestine. The insinuation that the Jews may have escaped the proscription, through the interest of the beautiful Poppæa and the favourite Jewish player Aliturus, though not very likely, is more in character with the times.

(3) The visit of St. Paul to Britain, in our opinion, is a fiction of religious national vanity.

It has few or no advocates except English ecclesiastical antiquarians. In fact, the state of the island, in which the precarious sovereignty of Rome was still fiercely contested by the native barbarians, seems to be entirely forgotten. Civilisation had made little progress in Britain till the conquest of Agricola. Up to that time, it was occupied only by the invading legionaries, fully employed in extending and guarding their conquests, and our wild ancestors with their sterner Druidical hierarchy. From which class were the Apostle's hearers or converts? My friend Dr. Cardwell, in a recent essay on this subject, concurs with this opinion.

(4) This is inferred from Hebr. xiii. 23. This inference, however, assumes several points. In the first place, that Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews. To this opinion, though by no means certain, we strongly incline. But it does not follow that Paul fulfilled his intention, and even the intention was conditional, and dependent on the speedy arrival of Timothy, which may or may not have taken place.

(5) Florus succeeded Albinus, A. D. 64

of the people, might either operate to deter or to induce the Apostle to undertake the journey. On the one hand, if the Jews should renew their implacable hostility, the Christians, now having become odious to the Roman government, could expect no protection; the rapacious tyranny of the new rulers would seize every occasion of including the Christian community under the grinding and vexatious system of persecution: and such occasion would be furnished by any tumult in which they might be implicated. On the other hand, the popular mind among the Jews being absorbed by stronger interests, engrossed by passions even more powerful than hatred of Christianity, the Apostle might have entered the city unnoticed, and remained concealed among his Christian friends; particularly as the frequent change in the ruling authorities, and the perpetual deposal of the High Priest, during the long interval of his absence, may have stripped his leading adversaries of their authority.

Be this as it may, there are manifest vestiges of his having visited many cities of Asia Minor—Ephesus, Colossæ (1), Miletus (2), Troas (3); that he passed a winter at Nicopolis, in Epirus (4). From hence he may have descended to Corinth (5), and from Corinth, probable reasons may be assigned for his return to Rome. In all these cities, and, doubtless, in many others, where we have no record of the first promulgation of the religion, the Christians formed regular and organised communities. Constant intercourse seems to have been maintained throughout the whole confederacy. Besides the Apostles, other persons seem to have been constantly travelling about, some entirely devoted to the dissemination of the religion, others uniting it with their own secular pursuits. Onesiphorus (6), it may be supposed, a wealthy merchant, resident at Ephesus, being in Rome at the time of Paul's imprisonment, laboured to alleviate the irksomeness of his confinement. Paul had constantly one, sometimes many, companions in his journeys. Some of these he seems to have established, as Titus, in Crete, to preside over the young communities; others were left behind for a time to superintend the interests of the religion; others, as Luke, the author of the Acts, were in more regular attendance upon him, and appear to have been only occasionally separated by accidental circumstances. But, if we may judge from the authentic records of the New Testament, the whole Christianity of the West emanated from Paul alone. The indefatigable activity of this one man had planted Christian colonies, each of which became the centre of a new moral civilisation, from the borders of Syria, as far as Spain, and to the city of Rome.

Tradition assigns to the last year of Nero the martyrdom both of

-- (1) Philem. 22.

(2) 2 Tim. iv. 20.

(3) 2 Tim. iv. 13. Compare Paley, *Horæ Pau-*
linæ.

(4) Titus, iii. 12.

(5) 2 Tim. iv. 20.

(6) 2 Tim. i. 16. 18

St. Peter and St. Paul. That of the former rests altogether on unauthoritative testimony ; that of the latter is rendered highly probable, from the authentic record of the second Epistle to Timothy. This letter was written by the author when in custody at Rome(1), apparently under more rigorous confinement than during his first imprisonment ; not looking forward to his release(2), but with steadfast presentiment of his approaching violent death. It contains allusions to his recent journey in Asia Minor and Greece. He had already undergone a first examination(3), and the danger was so great, that he had been deserted by some of his most attached followers, particularly by Demas. If conjecture be admitted, the preparations for the reception of Nero at Corinth, during the celebration of the Isthmian games, may have caused well-grounded apprehensions to the Christian community in that city. Paul might have thought it prudent to withdraw from Corinth, whither his last journey had brought him, and might seize the opportunity of the emperor's absence, to visit and restore the persecuted community at Rome. During the absence of Nero, the government of Rome and of Italy was entrusted to the freed-slave Helius, a fit representative of the absent tyrant. He had full power of life and death, even over the senatorial order. The world, says Dion, was enslaved at once to two autocrats, Helius and Nero. Thus Paul may have found another Nero in the hostile capital ; and the general tradition, that he was put to death, not by order of the emperor, but of the governor of the city, coincides with this state of things.

The fame of St. Peter, from whom she claims the supremacy of the Christian world, has eclipsed that of St. Paul in the Eternal City. The most splendid temple which has been erected by Christian zeal, to rival or surpass the proudest edifices of heathen magnificence, bears the name of that apostle, while that of St. Paul rises in a remote and unwholesome suburb. Studious to avoid, if possible, the treacherous and slippery ground of polemic controversy, we must be permitted to express our surprise that in no part of the authentic scripture occurs the slightest allusion to the personal history of St. Peter, as connected with the western churches. At all events, the conversion of the Gentile world was the acknowledged province of St. Paul. In that partition treaty, in which these two moral invaders divided the yet unconquered world, the more civilised province of Greek and Roman heathenism was assigned to him who was emphatically called the Apostle of the Gentiles, while the Jewish population fell under the particular care of the Galilean Peter. For the operations of the latter, no part of the world, exclusive of Palestine, which seems to have been left to James the

(1) All the names of the church who unite in the salutation, iv. 21., are Roman.

(2) 2 Tim. iv. 5, 6, 7.

(3) 2 Tim. i. 12, 16. Rosenmüller however (in loc.) understands this of the examination during his first trial.

Just, would afford such ample scope for success as Babylonia and the Asiatic provinces, to which the Epistles of Peter are addressed. His own writings distinctly show that he was connected by some intimate tie with these communities; and, as it appears, that Galatia was a stronghold of Judaical Christianity, it is probable that the greater part of those converts were originally Jews or Asiatics, whom Judaism had already prepared for the reception of Christianity. Where Judaism thus widely prevailed, was the appropriate province of the Apostle of the circumcision. While then those, whose severe historical criticism is content with nothing less than contemporary evidence, or, at least, probable inferences from such records, will question, at least, the permanent establishment of Peter in the imperial city, those who admit the authority of tradition will adhere to, and may, indeed, make a strong case in favour of St. Peter's residence (1); or his martyrdom at Rome (2).

The spent wave of the Neronian persecution (3) may have recovered sufficient force to sweep away those who were employed in reconstructing the shattered edifice of Christianity in Rome. The return of an individual, however personally obscure, yet connected with a sect so recently proscribed, both by popular odium and public authority, would scarcely escape the vigilant police of the metropolis. One individual is named, Alexander, the coppersmith,

(1) The authorities are Irenæus, Dionysius of Corinth apud Eusebium, and Epiphanius.

(2) Pearson in his *Opera Posthuma*, Diss. de serie et successione Romæ. Episcop. supposes Peter to have been in Rome. Compare Townson on the Gospels. Diss. 5. sect. v. Barrow, (*Treatise of the Pope's Supremacy*.) will not "avow" the opinion of those who argue him never to have been at Rome, vol. vi. p. 139. Oxford ed. 1818. Lightfoot, whose profound knowledge of every thing relating to the Jewish nation entitles his opinions to respect, observes, in confirmation of his assertion, that Peter lived and died in Chaldea,—*quam absurdum est statuere, ministerium præcipuum circumcisionis sedem suam fignere in metropoli præputiatorum, Romæ*. Lightfoot's Works, 8vo. edit. x. 392.

If, then, with Barrow I may "bear some civil respect to ancient testimonies and traditions" (loc. cit.), the strong bias of my own mind is to the following solution of this problem. With Lightfoot, I believe, that Babylonia was the scene of St. Peter's labours. But I am likewise confident that in Rome, as in Corinth, there were two communities,—a Petrine and a Pauline,—a Judaizing and an Hellenizing church. The origin of the two communities in the doctrines attributed to the two apostles, may have been gradually transmuted into the foundation first of each community, then generally of the church of Rome, by the two apostles. All the difficulties in the arrangement of the succession to the episcopal see of Rome vanish, if we suppose two cotemporary lines. Here, as elsewhere, the Judaizing church either expired or was absorbed in the Pauline community.

The passage in the Corinthians by no means necessarily implies the personal presence of Peter in that city. There was a party there, no doubt a judaizing one, which professed to preach

the pure doctrine of "Cephas," in opposition to that of Paul, and who called themselves, therefore, "of Cephas."

Dum primos ecclesiæ Romanæ fundatores quæro occurrit illud. Acts, ii. 10. *Οἱ ἰπιδι- μούντες Παμαῖοι Ιουδαῖοι τε καὶ προσή- λυτοι*. Lightfoot's Works, 8vo. edit. x. 392.

(3) As to the extent of the Neronian persecution, whether it was general, or confined to the city of Rome, I agree with Mosheim that only one valid argument is usually advanced on either side. On the one hand, that of Doddwell, that the Christians being persecuted not on account of their religion, but on the charge of incendiarism, that charge could not have been brought against those who lived beyond the precincts of the city. Though as to this point, it is to be feared that many an honest Protestant would have considered the real crime of the gunpowder plot, or the imputed guilt of the fire of London, ample justification for a general persecution of the Roman Catholics. On the other hand, is alleged the authority of Tertullian, who refers, in a public apology to the laws of Nero and Domitian against the Christians, an expression too distinct to pass for rhetoric, even in that passionate writer, though he may have magnified temporary edicts into general laws. The Spanish inscription not only wants confirmation, but even evidence that it ever existed. There is however a point of some importance in favour of the first opinion. Paul appears to have travelled about through a great part of the Roman empire during this interval, yet we have no intimation of his being in more than ordinary personal danger. It was not till his return to Rome that he was again apprehended, and at length suffered martyrdom.

Martyr-
dom of
Paul.

whose seemingly personal hostility had caused or increased the danger in which Paul considered himself during his second imprisonment. He may have been the original informer, who betrayed his being in Rome, or his intimate alliance with the Christians; or, he may have appeared as evidence against him during his examination. Though there may have been no existing law, or imperial rescript against the Christians; and Paul, having been absent from Rome at the time, could not be implicated in the charge of incendiarism; yet the representative of Nero, if faithfully described by Dion Cassius (1), would pay little regard to the forms of criminal justice, and would have no scruple in ordering the summary execution of an obscure individual, since it does not appear, that in exercising the jurisdiction of præfect of the city, he treated the lives of knights or of senators with more respect. There is, therefore, no improbability that the Christian church in Rome may have faithfully preserved the fact of Paul's execution, and even cherished in their pious memory the spot on the Ostian road, watered by the blood of the Apostle. As a Roman citizen, Paul is said to have been beheaded, instead of being suspended to a cross, or exposed to any of those horrid tortures invented for the Christians; and so far the modest probability of the relation may confirm rather than impeach its truth. The other circumstances—his conversion of the soldiers who carried him to execution, and of the executioner himself—bear too much the air of religious romance. Though, indeed, the Roman Christians had not the same interest in inventing or embellishing the martyrdom of Paul, as that of the other great Apostle from whom they derive their supremacy.

CHAPTER IV.

CHRISTIANITY TO THE CLOSE OF THE FIRST CENTURY.—CONSTITUTION OF CHRISTIAN CHURCHES.

Great re-
volutions
slow and
gradual

THE changes in the moral are usually wrought as imperceptibly as those in the physical world. Had any wise man, either convinced of the divine origin of Christianity, or even contemplating with philosophical sagacity the essential nature of the new religion, and the existing state of the human mind, ventured to predict, that from the ashes of these obscure men would arise a moral sove-

(1) Τους μίντοι ἐν τῇ Ρώμῃ καὶ τῇ καὶ ἰππίας καὶ κουλευτάς. Οὕτω μὲν Ἰταλία πάντα. Ἡλὶα τινὶ Καίσαρσιν ὡδὴ τότε ἡ τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἀρχὴ δ' ὅς αὐ- ἐκδότους παρίδωκε. Πάντα γὰρ ἀπλῶς τοκράτορσιν ἅμα ἑδούλευε, Νέρωνι καὶ Ἡλίῳ. Οὐδε ἔχω εἰπεῖν ὁπότερος αὐτῶν χεῖραν ἦν. Dion. Cassius, (or Xiphilin) lxiij. c. 12.

reignly more extensive and lasting than that of the Cæsars; that buildings more splendid than any which adorned the new marble city, now rising from the ruins of the conflagration, would be dedicated to their name, and maintain their reverence for an incalculably longer period; such vaticinations would have met the fate inseparable from the wisdom which outstrips its age, would have been scorned by cotemporary pride, and only admired after their accomplishment, by late posterity. The slight and contemptuous notice excited by Christianity during the first century of its promulgation is in strict accordance with this ordinary development of the great and lasting revolutions in human affairs. The moral world has sometimes, indeed, its volcanic explosions, which suddenly and violently convulse and reform the order of things; but its more enduring changes are in general produced by the slow and silent workings of opinions, remotely prepared and gradually expanding to their mature and irresistible influence. In default therefore of real information, as to the secret but simultaneous progress of Christianity in so many quarters, and among all ranks, we are left to speculate on the influence of the passing events of the time, and of the changes in the public mind, whether favourable or prejudicial to the cause of Christianity, catching only faint and uncertain gleams of its peculiar history through the confused and rapidly changing course of public affairs.

The Imperial history from the first promulgation of Christianity down to the accession of Constantine, divides itself into four distinct, but unequal periods. More than thirty years are occupied by the line of the first Cæsars, rather less by the conflicts which followed the death of Nero, and the government of the Flavian dynasty. The first years of Trajan, who ascended the Imperial throne. A. D. 98., nearly synchronize with the opening of the second century of Christianity; and that splendid period of internal peace and advancing civilisation, of wealth, and of prosperity, which has been described as the happiest in the annals of mankind, extends over the first eighty years of that century (1). Down to the accession of Constantine, nearly at the commencement of the fourth century, the empire became, like the great monarchies of the East, the prize of successful ambition and enterprise: almost every change of ruler is a change of dynasty; and already the borders of the empire have ceased to be respected by the menacing, the conquering Barbarians.

It is remarkable how singularly the political character of each period was calculated to advance the growth of Christianity.

During the first of these periods the government, though it still held in respect the old republican institutions, was, if not in form,

Imperial history divided into four periods.

First period to the death of Nero.

(1) Among the writers who have discussed this question may be consulted Hegewisch, whose work has been recently translated by M. Solvet,

under the title of *Essai sur l'Époque de l'Histoire Romaine la plus heureuse pour le Genre Humain*. Paris, 1834.

in its administration purely despotic. The state centered in the person of the Emperor. This kind of hereditary autocracy is essentially selfish : it is content with averting or punishing plots against the person, or detecting and crushing conspiracies against the power, of the existing monarch. To those more remote or secret changes, which are working in the depths of society, eventually perhaps threatening the existence of the monarchy, or the stability of all the social relations, it is blind or indifferent (1). It has neither sagacity to discern, intelligence to comprehend, nor even the disinterested zeal for the perpetuation of its own despotism, to counteract such distant and contingent dangers. Of all innovations it is, in general, sensitively jealous ; but they must be palpable and manifest, and directly clashing with the passions or exciting the fears of the sovereign. Even these are met by temporary measures. When an outcry was raised against the Egyptian religion as dangerous to public morality, an edict commanded the expulsion of its votaries from the city. When the superstition of the Emperor shuddered at the predictions of the mathematicians, the whole fraternity fell under the same interdict. When the public peace was disturbed by the dissensions among the Jewish population of Rome, the summary sentence of Claudius visited both Jews and Christians with the same indifferent severity. So the Neronian persecution was an accident arising out of the fire at Rome, no part of a systematic political plan for the suppression of foreign religions. It might have fallen on any other sect or body of men, who might have been designated as victims to appease the popular resentment. The provincial administrations would be actuated by the same principles as the central government, and be alike indifferent to the quiet progress of opinions, however dangerous to the existing order of things. Unless some breach of the public peace demanded their interference, they would rarely put forth their power ; and content with the maintenance of order, the regular collection of the revenue, the more rapacious with the punctual payment of their own exactions, the more enlightened with the improvement and embellishment of the cities under their charge, they would look on the rise and propagation of a new religion with no more concern than that of a new philosophic sect, particularly in the eastern part of the empire, where the religions were in general more foreign to the character of the Greek or Roman Polytheism. The popular feeling during this first period would only under peculiar circumstances outstrip the activity of the government. Accustomed to the separate worship of the Jews, to them Christianity appeared at first only as a modification of that belief. Local jealousies or personal animosities might

(1) *Savi proximis ingruunt.* In this one pregnant sentence of Tacitus is explained the political secret, that the mass of the people have sometimes been comparatively unoppressed under the most sanguinary tyranny.

in different places excite a more active hostility ; in Rome it is evident that the people were only worked up to find inhuman delight in the sufferings of the Christians, by the misrepresentations of the government, by superstitious solicitude to find some victims to appease the angry Gods, and that strange consolation of human misery, the delight of wreaking vengeance on whomsoever it can possibly implicate as the cause of the calamity.

During the whole then of this first period, to the death of Nero, both the primitive obscurity of Christianity, and the transient importance it assumed, as a dangerous enemy of the people of Rome, and subsequently as the guiltless victim of popular vengeance, would tend to its eventual progress. Its own innate activity, with all the force which it carried with it, both in its internal and external impulse, would propagate it extensively in the inferior, and middle classes of society ; while, though the great mass of the higher orders would still remain unacquainted with its real nature, and with its relation to its parent Judaism, it was quite enough before the public attention to awaken the curiosity of the more inquiring, and to excite the interest of those who were seriously concerned in the moral advancement of mankind. In many quarters, it is far from impossible that the strong revulsion of the public mind against Nero, after his death, may have extended some commiseration towards his innocent victims (1) : that the Christians were acquitted by the popular feeling of any real connection with the fire at Rome, appears evident from Tacitus, who retreats into vague expressions of general scorn and animosity (2). At all events the persecution must have had the effect of raising the importance of Christianity, so as to force it upon the notice of many, who might otherwise have been ignorant of its existence : the new and peculiar fortitude with which the sufferers endured their unprecedented trials, would strongly recommend it to those who were dissatisfied with the moral power of their old religion ; while on the other hand it was yet too feeble and obscure to provoke a systematic plan for its suppression.

During the second period of the first century, from A. D. 68 to 98, the date of the accession of Trajan, the larger portion was occupied by the reign of Domitian, a tyrant, in whom the successors of Augustus might appear to revive, both in the monstrous vices of his personal character, and of his government. Of the Flavian dynasty, the father alone, Vespasian, from the comprehensive vigour of his mind, perhaps from his knowledge of the Jewish character and religion, obtained during his residence in the East, was likely to estimate the bearings and future prospects of Christianity. But the

Second period to the accession of Trajan.

(1) This was the case even in Rome. Unde quanquam adversus fontes et novissima exempla meritis, miseratio oriebatur, tanquam non

utilitate publica, sed in servitium unius absumerentur. Tac. An. xv. 44.

(2) Odio humani generis convicti.

Stoic phi-
losophers.

total subjugation of Judæa, and the destruction of the Temple of Jerusalem, having reduced the religious parents of the Christians to so low a state, their nation and consequently their religion, being, according to the ordinary course of events, likely to mingle up and become absorbed in the general population of the Roman empire, Christianity, it might reasonably be supposed, would scarcely survive its original stock, and might be safely left to burn out by the same gradual process of extinction. Besides this, the strong mind of Vespasian was fully occupied by the restoration of order in the capital and in the provinces, and in fixing on a firm basis the yet unsettled authority of the Flavian dynasty. A more formidable, because more immediate danger, threatened the existing order of things. The awful genius of Roman liberty had entered into an alliance with the higher philosophy of the time. Republican stoicism, brooding in the noblest minds of Rome, looked back with vain though passionate regret, to the free institutions of their ancestors, and demanded the old liberty of action. It was this dangerous movement, not the new and humble religion, which calmly acquiesced in all political changes, and contented itself with liberty of thought and opinion, which put to the test the prudence and moderation of the emperor Vespasian. It was the spirit of Cato, not of Christ, which he found it necessary to control. The enemy before whom he trembled was the patriot Trasea, not the Apostle St. John, who was silently winning over Ephesus to the new faith. The edict of expulsion from Rome fell not on the worshippers of foreign religions, but on the philosophers, a comprehensive term, but which was probably limited to those whose opinions were considered dangerous to the Imperial authority (1).

Temple
lux.

It was only with the new fiscal regulations of the rapacious and parsimonious Vespasian, that the Christians were accidentally implicated. The Emperor continued to levy the capitation tax, which had been willingly and proudly paid by the Jews throughout the empire for the maintenance of their own temple at Jerusalem, for the restoration of the idolatrous fane of the Capitoline Jupiter, which had been destroyed in the civil contests. The Jew submitted with sullen reluctance to this insulting exaction; but even the hope of escaping it would not incline him to disguise or dissemble his faith. But the Judaizing Christian, and even the Christian of Jewish descent, who had entirely thrown off his religion, yet was marked by the indelible sign of his race, was placed in a singularly perplexing position (2). The rapacious publican, who farmed the tax, was not likely to draw any true distinction among those whose features, connexions, name, and notorious descent, still designated

(1) Tacit. Hist. iv. 4—9. Dion Cassius, lxxi. 13. Suetonius, Vespas. 15. Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs. Vespasian. Art. xv.

(2) Dion Cassius, edit. Reimar, with his notes,

lib. lxxi. p. 1082. Suetonius in Dom. v. 12. Martial, vii. 14. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs. vol. vii. ch. xi. p. 304.

them as liable to the tax : his coarser mind would consider the profession of Christianity as a subterfuge to escape a vexatious impost. But to the Jewish Christian of St. Paul's opinions, the unresisted payment of the burthen, however insignificant, and to which he was not bound, either by the letter or the spirit of the edict, was an acknowledgment of his unconverted Judaism, of his being still under the law, as well as an indirect contribution to the maintenance of heathenism. It is difficult to suppose that those who were brought before the public tribunal, as claiming an exemption from the tax, and exposed to the most indecent examination of their Jewish descent, were any other than this class of Judaizing Christians.

In other respects, the connexion of the Christians with the Jews could not but affect their place in that indiscriminating public estimation, which still, in general, notwithstanding the Neronian persecution, confounded them together. The Jewish war appears to have made a great alteration both in the condition of the race of Israel, and in the popular sentiment towards them. From aversion as a sullen and unsocial, they were now looked upon with hatred and contempt, as a fierce, a desperate, and an enslaved race. Some of the higher orders, Agrippa and Josephus the historian, maintained a respectable, and even an eminent rank at Rome ; but the provinces were overrun by swarms of Jewish slaves, or miserable fugitives, reduced by necessity to the meanest occupations, and lowering their minds to their sordid and beggarly condition. As then to some of the Romans the Christian assertion of religious freedom would seem closely allied with the Jewish attempt to obtain civil independence, they might appear, especially to those in authority, to have inherited the intractable and insubordinate spirit of their religious forefathers ; so, on the other hand, in some places, the Christian might be dragged down, in the popular apprehension, to the level of the fallen and outcast Jew. Thus, while Christianity in fact was becoming more and more alienated from Judaism, and even assuming the most hostile position, the Roman rulers would be the last to discern the widening breach, or to discriminate between that religious confederacy which was destined to absorb within it all the subjects of the Roman empire, and that race which was to remain in its social isolation, neither blended into the general mass of mankind, nor admitting any other within its insuperable pale. If the singular story related by Hegesippus (1) concerning the family of our Lord deserves credit, even the descendants of his house were endangered by their yet unbroken connection with the Jewish race. Domitian is said to have issued an edict for the extermination of the whole house of David, in order to annihilate for ever the hope of

Change in the condition and estimation of the Jews after the war.

The descendants of the brethren of our Lord brought before the tribunal.

(1) Eusebius, iii. 20.

the Messiah, which still brooded with dangerous excitement in the Jewish mind. The grandsons of St. Jude, "the brother of our Lord," were denounced by certain heretics as belonging to the proscribed family, and brought before the tribunal of the Emperor, or, more probably, that of the procurator of Judæa (1). They acknowledged their descent from the royal race, and their relationship to the Messiah; but in Christian language they asserted, that the kingdom which they expected was purely spiritual and angelic, and only to commence at the end of the world, after the return to judgment. Their poverty, rather than their renunciation of all temporal views, was their security. They were peasants, whose hands were hardened with toil, and whose whole property was a farm of about twenty-four English acres, and of the value of 9000 drachmes, or about 300 pounds sterling. This they cultivated by their own labour, and regularly paid the appointed tribute. They were released as too humble and too harmless to be dangerous to the Roman authority, and Domitian, according to the singularly inconsistent account, proceeded to annual his edict of persecution against the Christians. Like all the stories which rest on the sole authority of Hegesippus, this has a very fabulous air. At no period were the hopes of the Messiah, entertained by the Jews, so little likely to awaken the jealousy of the Emperor, as in the reign of Domitian. The Jewish mind was still stunned, as it were, by the recent blow: the whole land was in a state of iron subjection. Nor was it till the latter part of the reign of Trajan, and that of Hadrian, that they rallied for their last desperate and conclusive struggle for independence. Nor, however indistinct the line of demarcation between the Jews and the Christians, is it easy to trace the connection between the stern precaution for the preservation of the peace of the Eastern world and the stability of the Empire against any enthusiastic aspirant after an universal sovereignty, with what is sometimes called the second great persecution of Christianity; for the exterminating edict was aimed at a single family, and at the extinction of a purely Jewish tenet. Though it may be admitted that, even yet, the immediate return of the Messiah to reign on earth was dominant among most of the Jewish Christians of Palestine. Even if true, this edict was rather the hasty and violent expedient of an arbitrary sovereign, trembling for his personal security, and watchful to avert danger from his throne, than a profound and vigorous policy, which aimed at the suppression of a new religion, declaredly hostile, and threatening the existence of the established Polytheism.

Christianity, however, appears to have forced itself upon the knowledge and the fears of Domitian in a more unexpected quarter,—the bosom of his own family (2). Of his two cousins german,

(1) Gibbon thus modifies the story to which he appears to give some credit.

(2) Suetonius, in Domit. c. 15. Dion. Cassius, lxxvii. 14. Eusebius, iii. 18.

the sons of Flavius Sabinus, the one fell an early victim to his jealous apprehensions. The other, Flavius Clemens, is described by the epigrammatic biographer of the Cæsars, as a man of the most contemptible indolence of character. His peaceful kinsman, instead of exciting the fears, enjoyed, for some time, the favour, of Domitian. He received in marriage Domitilla, the niece of the Emperor, his children were adopted as heirs to the throne, Clemens himself obtained the consulship. On a sudden these harmless kinsmen became dangerous conspirators; they were arraigned on the unprecedented charge of Atheism and Jewish manners; the husband, Clemens, was put to death; the wife, Domitilla, banished to the desert island, either of Pontia, or Pandataria. The crime of Atheism was afterwards the common popular charge against the Christians; the charge to which, in all ages, those are exposed who are superior to the vulgar notion of the Deity. But it was a charge never advanced against Judaism; coupled, therefore, with that of Jewish manners, it is unintelligible, unless it refers to Christianity. Nor is it improbable that the contemptible want of energy, ascribed by Suetonius to Flavius Clemens, might be that unambitious superiority to the world which characterised the early Christian. Clemens had seen his brother cut off by the sudden and capricious fears of the tyrant; and his repugnance to enter on the same dangerous public career, in pursuit of honours which he despised, if it had assumed the lofty language of philosophy, might have commanded the admiration of his cotemporaries; but connected with a new religion, of which the sublimer notions and principles were altogether incomprehensible, only exposed him to their more contemptuous scorn. Neither in his case was it the peril apprehended from the progress of the religion, but the dangerous position of the individuals professing the religion, so near to the throne, which was fatal to Clemens and Domitilla. It was the pretext, not the cause, of their punishment; and the first act of the reign of Nerva was the reversal of these sentences by the authority of the senate: the exiles were recalled, and an act, prohibiting all accusations of Jewish manners (1), seems to have been intended as a peace-offering for the execution of Clemens, and for the especial protection of the Christians.

But Christian history cannot pass over another incident assigned to the reign of Domitian, since it relates to the death of St. John the Apostle. Christian gratitude and reverence soon began to be discontented with the silence of the authentic writings as to the fate of the twelve chosen companions of Christ. It began first with some modest respect for truth, but soon with bold defiance of probability to brighten their obscure course, till each might be traced by the blaze of miracle into remote regions of the world, where it is clear,

Flavius
Clemens.

Legends
of the mis-
sions of
the Apo-
stles into
different
countries.

(1) Dion Cassius, lxxviii. 1.

Death of
St. John.

that if they had penetrated, no record of their existence was likely to survive (1). These religious invaders, according to the later Christian romance, made a regular partition of the world, and assigned to each the conquest of his particular province. Thrace, Scythia, Spain, Britain, Ethiopia, the extreme parts of Africa, India, the name of which mysterious region was sometimes assigned to the southern coast of Arabia, had each their Apostle, whose spiritual triumphs and cruel martyrdom were vividly portrayed and gradually amplified by the fertile invention of the Greek and Syrian historians of the early church. Even the history of St. John, whose later days were chiefly passed in the populous and commercial city of Ephesus, has not escaped. Yet legend has delighted in harmonising its tone with the character of the beloved disciple, drawn in the Gospel, and illustrated in his own writings. Even if purely imaginary, these stories show that another spirit was working in the mind of man. While then we would reject, as the offspring of a more angry and controversial age, the story of his flying in fear and indignation from a bath polluted by the presence of the heretic Cerinthus, we might admit the pleasing tradition that when he grew so feeble from age as to be unable to utter any long discourse, his last, if we may borrow the expression, his cynean voice, dwelt on a brief exhortation to mutual charity (2). His whole sermon consisted in these words : "Little children, love one another;" and when his audience remonstrated at the wearisome iteration of the same words, he declared that in these words was contained the whole substance of Christianity. The deportation of the Apostle to the wild island of Patmos, where general tradition places his writing the book of Revelations, is by no means improbable, if we suppose it to have taken place under the authority of the proconsul of Asia, on account of some local disturbance in Ephesus, and, notwithstanding the authority of Tertullian, reject the trial before Domitian at Rome, and the plunging him into a cauldron of boiling oil, from which he came forth unhurt (3). Such are the few vestiges of the progress of Christianity which we dimly trace in the obscurity of the latter part of the first century. During this period, however, took place the regular formation of the young Christian republics, in all the more considerable cities of the Empire. The primitive constitution of these churches is a subject which it is impossible to decline, though few points in Christian history rest on more dubious and imperfect, in general on inferential evidence, yet few have been contested with greater pertinacity.

Constitution of
Christian
churches.

The whole of Christianity, when it emerges out of the obscurity

(1) Ruseb. Ecc. Hist. iii. 1. The tradition is here in its simpler and clearly more genuine form.

(2) Euseb. Ecc. Hist. iii. 22.

(3) Ubi (in Româ) Apostolus Johannes,

postea quam in oleum igneum demersus, nihil passus est. Mosheim suspects that in this passage of Tertullian a metaphor has been converted into a fact. Mosheim, de Reb. Christ. ante Constant. p. 111.

of the first century, appears uniformly governed by certain superiors of each community, called bishops. But the origin and extent of this superiority, and the manner in which the bishop assumed a distinct authority from the inferior presbyters, is among those difficult questions of Christian history which, since the Reformation, has been more and more darkened by those fatal enemies to candid and dispassionate inquiry, prejudice and interest. The earliest Christian communities appear to have been ruled and represented, in the absence of the Apostle who was their first founder, by their elders, who are likewise called bishops, or overseers of the churches. These presbyter bishops and the deacons are the only two orders which we discover at first in the church of Ephesus, at Philippi, and perhaps in Crete (1). On the other hand, at a very early period, one religious functionary, superior to the rest, appears to have been almost universally recognised: at least, it is difficult to understand how, in so short a time, among communities, though not entirely disconnected, yet scattered over the whole Roman world, a scheme of government popular, or rather aristocratical, should become, even in form, monarchical. Neither the times nor the circumstances of the infant church, nor the primitive spirit of the religion, appear to favour a general, a systematic, and an unauthorised usurpation of power on the part of the supreme religious functionary (2). Yet the change has already taken place within the Apostolic times. The church of Ephesus, which in the Acts is represented by its elders, in the Revelations (3) is represented by its angel or bishop. We may, perhaps, arrive at a more clear and intelligible view of this subject, by endeavouring to trace the origin and development of the Christian communities.

The Christian church was almost universally formed by a secession from a Jewish synagogue. Some synagogues may have become

Christian churches
formed from, and
on the model of the
synagogue.

(1) Acts, xx. 17., compared with 28. Philip. 1. 1. Titus, i. 5—7.

(2) The most plausible way of accounting for this total revolution is by supposing that the affairs of each community or church were governed by a college of presbyters, one of whom necessarily presided at their meetings, and gradually assumed and was recognised as possessing a superior function and authority. In expressing my dissatisfaction with a theory adopted by Mosheim, by Gibbon, by Neander, and by most of the learned foreign writers, I have scrutinised my own motives with the utmost suspicion, and can only declare that I believe myself actuated only by the calm and candid desire of truth. But the universal and almost simultaneous elevation of the bishop, under such circumstances, in every part of the world (though it must be admitted that he was for a long time assisted by the presbyters in the discharge of his office), appears to me an insuperable objection to this hypothesis. The later the date which is assumed for the general establishment of the episcopal authority, the less likely was it to be general. It was only during the first

period of undivided unity that such an usurpation, for so it must have been according to this theory, could have been universally acquiesced in without resistance. All presbyters, according to this view, with one consent, gave up or allowed themselves to be deprived of their co-ordinate and coequal dignity. The further we advance in Christian history, the more we discover the common motives of human nature at work. In this case alone are we to suppose them without influence? Yet we discover no struggle, no resistance, no controversy. The uninterrupted line of bishops traced by the ecclesiastical historian up to the Apostles; but no murmur of remonstrance against this usurpation has transpired; no schism, no breach of Christian unity followed upon this momentous innovation. Nor does any such change appear to have taken place in the office of elder in the Jewish communities: the rabbinical teachers took the form of a regular hierarchy, their patriarch grew up into a kind of pope, but episcopal authority never took root in the synagogue.

(3) Chap. ii. 1.

altogether Christian ; but, in general, a certain part of an existing community of Jews and Gentile proselytes incorporated themselves into a new society, and met for the purpose of divine worship in some private chamber,—sometimes, perhaps, in a public place, as rather later, during the times of persecution, in a cemetery. The first of these may have answered to a synagogue, the latter to an unwalled proseucha. The model of the ancient community would naturally, as far as circumstances might admit, become that of the new. But in their primary constitution there was an essential point of difference. The Jews were a civil as well as a religious, the Christians exclusively a religious, community. Every where that the Jews were settled, they were the colony of a nation, they were held together almost by a kindred, as well as by a religious, bond of union. The governors, therefore, of the community, the Zakinim or Elders, the Parnasim or Pastors (if this be an early appellation), were by no means necessarily religious functionaries (1). Another kind of influence, besides that of piety, age, worldly experience, wealth, would obtain the chief and ruling power in the society. Their government neither rested on, nor required, spiritual authority. Their grave example would enforce the general observance, their censure repress any flagrant departure from the law : they might be consulted on any difficult or unusual point of practice ; but it was not till the new rabbinical priesthood was established, and the Mishna and the Talmud universally received as the national code, that the foreign Jews fell under what may be considered sacerdotal dominion. At this time, the synagogue itself was only supplementary to the great national religious ceremonial of the Temple. The Levitical race claimed no peculiar sanctity, at least it discharged no priestly office, beyond the bounds of the Holy Land, 'or the precincts of the Temple ; nor was an authorised instructor of the people necessary to the service of the synagogue. It was an assembly for the purpose of worship, not of teaching. The instructor of the people, the copy of the law, lay in the ark at the east end of the building ; it was brought forth with solemn reverence, and an appointed portion read during the service. But oral instruction, though it might sometimes be delivered, was no necessary part of the ceremonial. Any one, it should seem, who considered himself qualified, and obtained permission from the archisynagogi, the governors of the community, who exercised a sort of presidency in the synagogue, might address the assembly. It was in this character that the Christian Apostle usually began to announce his religion. But neither the chazan, or angel (2) of the synagogue

Essential
difference
between
the church
and syna-
gogue.

(1) In some places, the Jews seem to have been ruled by an Ethnarch, recognised by the Roman civil authorities. Strabo, quoted by Josephus, Antiq. xiv. 12., speaks of the Ethnarch in Alexandria. Josephus mentions their Archon or

chief, in Antioch. The more common constitution seems to have been the *γεραιοὶ* and *δυνατοί*, — the elders or authorities.

(2) The angel here seems to bear its lower meaning—a messenger or minister.

(which was a purely ministerial, comparatively a servile, office), nor the heads of the assembly, possessed any peculiar privilege, or were endowed with any official function as teachers (1) of the people. Many of the more remote synagogues can rarely have been honoured by the presence of the "Wise Men," as they were afterwards called,—the lawyers of this period. The Jewish religion was, at this time, entirely ceremonial; it did not necessarily demand exposition; its form was moulded into the habits of the people; and till disturbed by the invasion of Christianity, or among very flourishing communities, where it assumed a more intellectual tone, and extended itself by the proselytism of the Gentiles, it was content to rest in that form (2). In the great days of Jewish intellectual activity, the adjacent law school, usually inseparable from the synagogue, might rather be considered the place of religious instruction. This was a kind of chapter-house or court of ecclesiastical, with the Jews identical with their national, law. Here knotty points were publicly debated; and "the Wise," or the more distinguished of the lawyers or interpreters of the law, as the rabbinical hierarchy of a later period, established their character for sagacious discernment of the meaning and intimate acquaintance with the whole body of the law.

Thus, then, the model upon which the church might be expected to form itself, may be called purely aristocratical. The process by which it passed into the monarchical form, however limited the supreme power of the individual, may be traced to the existence of a monarchical principle anterior to their religious oligarchy, and which distinguished the Christian church in its first origin from the Jewish synagogue. The Christians from the first were a purely religious community; this was their primary bond of union; they had no national law which held them together as a separate people. Their civil union was a subordinate effect, arising out of their incorporation as a spiritual body. The submission of their temporal concerns to the adjudication of their own community was a consequence of their respect for the superior justice and wisdom which sprung from their religious principles, and an aversion from the litigious spirit engendered by the complicated system of Roman jurisprudence (3). In their origin they were almost universally a community, formed, as it were, round an individual. The Apostle, or primitive teacher, was installed at once in the office of chief religious functionary; and the chief religious functionary is the natural head

Christian
church
formed
round an
individual.

(1) Vitrina labours to prove the point, that the chief of the synagogue exercised an office of this kind, but in my opinion without success. It appears to have been a regular part of the Essene service, a distinction which Vitrina has neglected to observe. *De Syn. Vet.* l. iii. c. 6, 7.

(2) The reading of the law, prayers, and psalms, were the ceremonial of the synagogue.

Probably the greater part of their proselytism took place in private, though, as we know from Horace, the Jewish synagogue was even in Rome a place of resort to the curious, the speculative, and the idle.

(3) The Apostle enjoined this secession from the ordinary courts of justice, *1 Cor. vi.* 1—8.

of a purely religious community. Oral instruction, as it was the first, so it must have continued to be the living, conservative, and expansive principle of the community (1). It was, anterior to the existence of any book, the inspired record and supreme authority of the faith. As long as this teacher remained in the city, or as often as he returned, he would be recognised as the legitimate head of the society. But not only the Apostle, in general the primitive teacher likewise, was a missionary, travelling incessantly into distant regions for the general dissemination of Christianity, rather than residing in one spot to organise a local community (2). In his absence, the government, and even the instruction, of the community devolved upon the senate of Elders, yet there was still a recognised supremacy in the founder of the church (3). The wider, however, the dissemination of Christianity, the more rare, and at longer intervals, the presence of the Apostle. An appeal to his authority, by letter, became more precarious and interrupted; while, at the same time, in many communities, the necessity for his interposition became more frequent and manifest (4); and in the common order of nature, even independent of the danger of persecution, the primitive founder, the legitimate head of the community, would vacate his place by death. That the Apostle should appoint some distinguished individual as the delegate, the representative, the successor, to his authority, as primary instructor of the community; invest him in an episcopacy of overseership, superior to that of the co-ordinate body of Elders, is, in itself, by no means improbable; it harmonises with the period in which we discover, in the Sacred Writings, this change in the form of the permanent government of the different bodies; accounts most easily for the general submission to the authority of one religious chief magistrate, so unsatisfactorily explained by the accidental pre-eminence of the president of a college of co-equal presbyters; and is confirmed by general tradition,

(1) For some time, indeed, as in the Jewish synagogue, what was called the gift of prophecy seems to have been more general; any individual who professed to speak under the direct impulse of the Holy Spirit was heard with attentive reverence. But it may be questioned whether this, and the display of the other *χαρίσματα* recounted by the Apostle, 1 Cor. xii. 4—10., were more than subsidiary to the regular and systematic teaching of the apostolic founder of the community. The question is not whether each member was not at liberty to contribute by any faculty which had been bestowed on him by God, to the general edification; but whether, above and anterior to all this, there was not some recognised parent of each church, who was treated with paternal deference, and exercised, when present, paternal authority.

(2) Yet we have an account of a residence even of St. Paul of eighteen months at Corinth, of two years at Ephesus, and he was two years during his first imprisonment at Rome. Acts, xviii. 11.; xix. 10.; xxviii. 30.

(3) St. Paul considered himself invested with

the superintendence of all the churches which he had planted. 2 Cor. xi. 28.

(4) St. Jerome, quoted by Hooker (*Eccles. Polity*, b. vii. vol. iii. p. 130.), assigns the origin of episcopacy to the dissensions in the church, which required a stronger coercive authority. "Till through instinct of the devil, there grew in the church factions, and among the people it began to be professed, I am of Paul, I of Apollon, and I of Cephas, churches were governed by the common advice of presbyters: but when every one began to reckon those who he had baptized his own, and not Christ's, it was decreed in the whole world that one chosen out of the presbyters should be placed above the rest, to whom all care of the church should belong, and so all seeds of schism be removed."

The government of the church seems to have been considered a subordinate function. "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondly prophets, thirdly teachers: after that, miracles, the gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. 1 Cor. xii. 28

which has ever, in strict unison with every other part of Christian history, preserved the names of many successors of the Apostles, the first bishops in most of the larger cities in which Christianity was first established. But the authority of the bishop was that of influence, rather than of power. After the first nomination by the Apostle (if such nomination, as we suppose, generally took place), his successor was elective by that kind of acclamation which raised at once the individual most eminent for his piety and virtue to the post, which was that of danger, as well as of distinction. For a long period, the suffrages of the community ratified the appointment. Episcopal government was thus, as long as Christianity remained unleavened by worldly passions and interests, essentially popular. The principle of subordination was inseparable from the humility of the first converts. Rights are never clearly defined till they are contested; nor is authority limited as long as it rests upon general reverence. When, on the one side, aggression, on the other, jealousy and mistrust, begin, then it must be fenced by usage and defined by law. Thus while we are inclined to consider the succession of bishops from the Apostolic times to be undeniable, the nature and extent of authority which they derived from the Apostles is altogether uncertain. The ordination or consecration, whatever it might be to that office, of itself conveyed neither inspiration nor the power of working miracles, which, with the direct commission from the Lord himself, distinguished and set apart the primary Apostles from the rest of mankind. It was only in a very limited and imperfect sense that they could, even in the sees founded by the Apostles, be called the successors of the Apostles.

Authority
of the
bishop.

The presbyters were, in their origin, the *ruling* powers of the young communities; but in a society founded solely on a religious basis, religious qualifications would be almost exclusively considered. In the absence, therefore, of the primary teacher, they would assume that office likewise. In this they would differ from the Jewish elders. As the most eminent in piety and Christian attainments, they would be advanced by, or at least with, the general consent, to their dignified station. The same piety and attainments would designate them as best qualified to keep up and to extend the general system of instruction. They would be the regular and perpetual expositors of the Christian law (1); the reciters of the life, the doctrines, the death, the resurrection of Christ; till the Gospels were written, and generally received, they would be the living Evangelists, the oral Scriptures, the spoken Gospel. They would not merely regulate and

The pres-
byters.

(1) Here, likewise, the possessors of the *χρισματα* would be the casual and subsidiary instructors, or rather the gifted promoters of Christian piety each in his separate sphere, according to his distinctive grace. But besides these, even if they were found in all churches, which is by no means clear, regular and systematic teachers would be necessary to a religion which probably could only subsist, certainly could not propagate itself with activity or to any great extent, except by this constant exposition of its principles in the public assembly, as well as in the more private communications of individuals.

lead the devotions, administer the rites of baptism and the Lord's Supper, but repeat again and again, for the further confirmation of the believers, and the conversion of Jews and Heathens, the facts and the tenets of the new religion. The government, in fact, in communities bound together by Christian brotherhood (such as we may suppose to have been the first Christian churches, which were happily undistracted by the disputes arising out of the Judaical controversy) would be an easy office, and entirely subordinate to that of instruction and edification. The communities would be almost self-governed by the principle of Christian love which first drew them together. The deacons were from the first an inferior order, and exercised a purely ministerial office; distributing the common fund to the poorer members, though the administration of the pecuniary concerns of the church soon became of such importance as to require the superintendence of the higher rulers. The other functions of the deacons were altogether of a subordinate character.

Such would be the ordinary development of a Christian community, in the first case, monarchical, as founded by an individual Apostle or recognised teacher of Christianity; subsequently, in the absence of that teacher, aristocratical, under a senate formed according to Jewish usage, though not precisely on Jewish principles; until the place of the Apostle being supplied by a bishop, in a certain sense, his representative or successor, it would revert to a monarchical form, limited rather by the religion itself than by any appointed controlling power. As long as the same holy spirit of love and charity actuated the whole body, the result would be an harmony, not from the counteracting powers of opposing forces, but from the consentient will of the general body; and the will of the government would be the expression of the universal popular sentiment (1). Where, however, from the first, the Christian community was formed of conflicting parties, or where conflicting principles began to operate immediately upon the foundation of the society, no individual would be generally recognised as the authoritative teacher, and the assumption and recognition of the episcopate would be more slow; or, indeed, would not take place at all till the final triumph of one of the conflicting parties. They retained, of necessity, the republican form. Such was the state of the Corinthian church, which was formed from its origin, or almost immediately divided into three separate parties, with a leading

Church of
Corinth an
ception.

(1) Such is the theory of episcopal government in a pleasing passage in the Epistles of Ignatius. "Ὅθεν πρέπει ὑμῖν συντρέχειν τῇ τοῦ ἐπισκόπου γνώμῃ. Ὅτι καὶ ποιεῖτε. Τὸ γὰρ ἀξιονόμαστον ὑμῶν πρεσβυτέρων, οὕτως συνήρμωσται τῷ ἐπισκόπῳ ὡς χορδαὶ κιθάρας· διὰ τοῦτο ἐν τῇ ὁμο-

νοσίᾳ ὑμῶν, καὶ συμφωνῶν ἀγάπῃ Ἰησοῦς Χριστὸς ἀδεται καὶ οἱ κατ' ἄνδρα δε χορδὸς γίνεσθε, ἵνα σύμφωνοι ὄντες ἐν ὁμονοίᾳ, χάριμα θεοῦ λαβόντες ἐν ἐνότητι, ἀδείτε ἐν φωνῇ μιᾷ διὰ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ τῷ πατρὶ, &c. Ad Ephes. p. 12. edit. Cotel. I speak of these epistles in a subsequent note.

teacher or teachers at the head of each (1). The Petrine, or the ultra Judaic, the Apolline, or more moderate Jewish party, contested the supremacy with the followers of St. Paul. Different individuals possessed, exercised, and even abused different gifts. The authority of Paul himself appears clearly, by his elaborate vindication of his apostolic office, by no means to have been generally recognised. No apostolic head, therefore, would assume an uncontested supremacy, nor would the parties coalesce in the choice of a superior. Corinth, probably, was the last community which settled down under the general episcopal constitution.

The manner and the period of the separation of a distinct class, an hierarchy, from the general body of the community; and the progress of the great division between the clergy and the laity (2), are equally obscure with the primitive constitution of the church. Like the Judaism of the provinces, Christianity had no sacerdotal order. But as the more eminent members of the community were admitted to take the lead, on account of their acknowledged religious superiority, from their zeal, their talents, their gifts, their sanctity, the general reverence would, of itself, speedily set them apart as of a higher order; they would form the purest aristocracy, and soon be divided by a distinct line of demarcation from the rest of the community. Whatever the ordination might be which designated them for their peculiar function, whatever power or authority might be communicated by the "imposition of hands," it would add little to the reverence with which they were invested. It was at first the Christian who sanctified the function, afterwards the function sanctified the man. But the civil and religious concerns of the church were so moulded up together, or rather, the temporal were so absorbed by the spiritual, that not merely the teacher, but the governor, not merely the bishop properly so called, but the presbyter in his character of ruler, as well as of teacher, shared in the same peculiar veneration. The bishop would be necessarily mingled up in the few secular affairs of the community, the governors bear their part in the religious ceremonial. In this respect, again, they differed from their prototypes, or elders of the synagogue. Their office was, of necessity, more religious. The admission of members in the Jewish synagogue, except in the case of proselytes of righteousness, was a matter of hereditary right: circumcision was a domestic, not a public ceremony. But baptism,

(1) I was led to conjecture that the distracted state of the church of Corinth might induce the Apostles to establish elsewhere a more firm and vigorous authority, before I remembered the passage of St. Jerome quoted above, which coincides with this view. Corinth has been generally taken as the model of the early Christian constitution; I suspect, that it was rather an anomaly.

(2) Already the *ἐκκλησία* are a distinct class in

the Epistle of Clemens to the Corinthians (c. xl. p. 170. edit. Coteler.). This epistle is confidently appealed to by both parties in the controversy about church government, and altogether satisfies neither. It is clear, however, from the tone of the whole epistle, that the church at Corinth was any thing rather than a model of church government: it had been rent with schisms ever since the days of the Apostle.

or the initiation into the Christian community, was a solemn ceremonial, requiring previous examination and probation. The governing power would possess and exercise the authority to admit into the community. They would perform, or at all events superintend, the initiatory rite of baptism. The other distinctive rite of Christianity, the celebration of the Lord's Supper, would require a more active interference and co-operation on the part of those who presided over the community. To this there was nothing analogous in the office of the Jewish elder. Order would require that this ceremony should be administered by certain individuals. If the bishop presided, after his appointment, both at the Lord's Supper itself and in the agape or feast which followed it, the elders would assist, not merely in maintaining order, but would officiate throughout the ceremony. In proportion to the reverence for the consecrated elements would be the respect towards those under whose especial prayers, and in whose hands, probably from the earliest period, they were sanctified for the use of the assembly. The presbyters would likewise possess the chief voice, a practical initiative, in the nomination of the bishop. From all these different functions, the presbyters, and at length the deacons, became, as well as the bishop, a sacred order. But the exclusive or sacerdotal principle once admitted in a religious community, its own corporate spirit, and the public reverence, would cause it to recede further and further, and draw the line of demarcation with greater rigour and depth. They would more and more insulate themselves from the commonality of the Christian republic; they would become a senate, a patrician, or privileged order; and this secession into their peculiar sphere would be greatly facilitated by the regular gradations of the faithful and the catechumen, the perfect and the imperfect, the initiate and half-initiate, Christians. The greater the variety, the more strict the subordination of ranks.

Thus the bishop gradually assumed the title of pontiff; the presbyters became a sacerdotal order. From the Old Testament, and even from paganism, the Christians, at first as ennobling metaphors, adopted their sacred appellations. Insensibly the meaning of these significant titles worked into the Christian system. They assumed, as it were, a privilege of nearer approach to the Deity; and a priestly caste grew rapidly up in a religion which, in its primary institution, acknowledged only one mediator between earth and heaven. We shall subsequently trace the growth of the sacerdotal principle, and the universal establishment of the hierarchy.

CHAPTER V.

CHRISTIANITY AND ORIENTALISM.

CHRISTIANITY had not only to contend with the Judaism of its native region, and the Paganism of the Western world, but likewise with the Asiatic religions, which, in the eastern provinces of the Roman empire, maintained their ground, or mingled themselves with the Grecian Polytheism, and had even penetrated into Palestine. In the silence of its authentic records, the direct progress of Christianity in the East can neither be accurately traced nor clearly estimated; its conflict with Orientalism is chiefly visible in the influence of the latter upon the general system of Christianity, and in the tenets of the different sects which, from Simon Magus to Manes, attempted to reconcile the doctrines of the Gospel with the theogonical systems of Asia. In the West, Christianity advanced with gradual, but unobstructed and unreceding, progress, till, first the Roman empire, and successively the barbarous nations who occupied or subdued the rest of Europe, were brought within its pale. No new religion arose to dispute its supremacy; and the feeble attempt of Julian to raise up a Platonic Paganism in opposition to the religion of Christ must have failed, even if it had not been cut short in its first growth by the death of its imperial patron. In Asia, the progress of Christianity was suddenly arrested by the revival of Zoroastrianism, after the restoration of the Persian kingdom upon the ruins of the Parthian monarchy; and, at a later period, the vestiges of its former success were almost entirely obliterated by the desolating and all-absorbing conquests of Mahometanism. The Armenian was the only national church which resisted, alike the persecuting edicts of the Sassanian fire-worshippers, and, submitting to the yoke of the Mahometan conqueror, rejected the worship of the Prophet. The other scattered communities of Christians, disseminated through various parts of Asia, on the coast of Malabar, perhaps in China, have no satisfactory evidence of Apostolic or even of very early date: they are so deeply impregnated with the Nestorian system of Christianity, which, during the interval between the decline of the reformed Zoroastrianism and the first outburst of Islamism, spread to a great extent throughout every part of the Eastern continent (1), that there is every reason to suppose them Nestorian in their origin (2). The contest, then, of Chris-

(1) There is an extremely good view of the origin and history of the Christian communities in India, in Bohlen, *das alte Indien*.

(2) Compare the new edition of Gibbon with the editor's note on the Nestorian Christians and the famous inscription of Siganfu, viii. 347.

tianity with the Eastern religions must be traced in their reaction upon the new religion of the West. By their treacherous alliance, they probably operated more extensively to the detriment of the Evangelic religion than Paganism by its open opposition. Asiatic influences have worked more completely into the body and essence of Christianity than any other foreign elements; and it is by no means improbable that tenets, which had their origin in India, have for many centuries predominated, or materially affected the Christianity of the whole Western world.

Situation
of Palesti-
ne favou-
rable for a
new reli-
gion.

Judaism.

Palestine was admirably situated to become the centre and point of emanation for an universal religion. On the confines of Asia and Europe, yet sufficiently secluded from both to be out of the way of the constant flux and reflux of a foreign population, it commanded Egypt, and, through Egypt, associated Africa with the general moral kingdom. But it was not merely calculated for the birthplace of an universal faith by its local position; Judaism, as it were, in its character (putting out of sight, for an instant, its divine origin) stood between the religions of the East and the West. It was the connecting link between the European and the Asiatic mind. In speculative sublimity, the doctrine of the Divine Unity soared to an equal height with the vast and imaginative cosmogonies of the East, while in its practical tendencies it approximated to the active and rational genius of the West.

General
character
of Orient-
alism.

The religions of Asia appear, if not of regularly affiliated descent, yet to possess a common and generic character, modified, indeed, by the genius of the different people, and, perhaps, by the prevailing tone of mind in the authors and founders of new doctrines. From the banks of the Ganges, probably from the shores of the Yellow Sea and the coasts of further India, to the Phœnician borders of the Mediterranean, and the undefined limits of Phrygia in Asia Minor, there was that connection and similitude, that community of certain elementary principles, that tendency to certain combinations of physical and moral ideas, which may be expressed by the term Orientalism (1). The speculative theology of the higher, the sacerdotal, order, which in some countries left the superstitions of the vulgar undisturbed, or allowed their own more sublime conceptions to be lowered to their rude and limited material notions, aspired to the primal Source of Being. The Emanation system of India, according to which the whole-worlds flowed from the Godhead and were finally to be reabsorbed into it; the Pantheism into which this degenerated, and which made the collective universe itself the Deity; the Dualism of Persia, according to which the antagonist powers were created by, or proceeded from, the One Supreme and Un-

(1) Compare Windischman, *Philosophie in fortgang der Welt Geschichte*. Windischman was a friend, I believe I may venture to say, a disciple, of F. Schlegel, and belongs to the high

Roman Catholic school in Germany. His book, which is full of abstruse thought and learning, develops the theory of a primitive tradition diffused through the East.

created; the Chaldean doctrine of divine Energies or Intelligences, the prototypes of the cabalistic Sephiroth, and the later Gnostic Æons, the same, no doubt, under different names, with the Æon and Protogenes, the Genos and Genea, with their regularly-coupled descendants in the Phœnician cosmogony of Sanchoniathon; and finally, the primitive and simpler worship of Egypt; all these are either branches of one common stock, or expressions of the same state of the human mind, working with kindred activity on the same visible phenomena of nature, and with the same object. The Asiatic mind impersonated, though it did not, with the Greek, humanise every thing. Light and Darkness, Good and Evil, the Creative and Destructive energy of nature, the active and passive Powers of generation, moral Perfection and Wisdom, Reason and Speech, even Agriculture and the Pastoral life, each was a distinct and intelligent being; they wedded each other according to their apparent correspondences; they begat progeny according to the natural affiliation or consequence of ideas. One great elementary principle pervaded the whole religious systems of the East, the connection of *moral with physical ideas*, the inherent *purity, the divinity, of mind or spirit*, the inalienable *evil of its antagonist, matter*. Whether Matter co-existed with the First Great Cause; whether it was created by his power, but from its innate malignity became insubordinate to his will; whether it was extraneous to his existence, necessarily subsisting, though without form, till its inert and shapeless mass was worked upon by the Deity himself, or by his primal power or emanation, the Demiurge or Creator of the existing worlds: on these points the different national creeds were endlessly diversified. But in its various forms, the principle itself was the universal doctrine of the Eastern world; it was developed in their loftiest philosophy (in fact, their higher philosophy and their speculative religion were the same thing); it gave a kind of colouring even to their vulgar superstition, and operated, in many cases, almost to an incredible extent, on their social and political system. This great primal tenet is alike the elementary principle of the higher Brahminism and the more moral Buddhism of India and the remoter East. The theory of the division of castes supposes that a larger portion of the pure mind of the Deity is infused into the sacerdotal and superior orders; they are nearer the Deity, and with more immediate hope of being reabsorbed into the divine essence; while the lower classes are more inextricably immersed in the grosser matter of the world, their feeble portion of the essential spirit of the Divinity contracted and lost in the predominant mass of corruption and malignity (1). The Buddhist, substituting a moral for an here-

Purity of
mind.
Maligni
of mat-

The un-
iversal pri-
mary pri-
nciple.

(1) The self-existing power declared the purest part of him to be the mouth. Since the Brahmen sprung from the most excellent part; since

he was the first horn, and since he possesses the Veda, he is by right the chief of the whole creation. Jones's Menu, i. 92, 93.

ditary approximation to the pure and elementary mind, rests, nevertheless, on the same primal theory, and carries the notion of the abstraction of the spiritual part from the foul and corporeal being to an equal, if not a greater height of contemplative mysticism (1). Hence the sanctity of fire among the Persians (2); that element which is most subtle and defæcated from all material corruption; it is therefore the representative of pure elementary mind, of Deity itself (3). It exists independent of the material forms in which it abides, the sun and the heavenly bodies. To infect this holy element with any excretion or emanation from the material form of man; to contaminate it with the putrescent effluvia of the dead and soulless corpse, was the height of guilt and impiety.

Source of
Asceticism.

This one simple principle is the parent of that Asceticism which maintained its authority among all the older religions of the remoter East, forced its way at a very early period into Christianity, where, for some centuries it exercised a predominant influence, and subdued even the active and warlike genius of Mahometanism to its dreamy and extatic influence. On the cold table-lands of Thibet, in the forests of India, among the busy population of China, on the burning shores of Siam, in Egypt and in Palestine, in Christianised Europe, in Mahometanised Asia, the worshipper of the Lama, the Faquir, the Bonze, the Talapoin, the Essene, the Therapeutist, the Monk, and the Dervish, have withdrawn from the society of man, in order to abstract the pure mind from the dominion of foul and corrupting matter. Under each system, the perfection of human nature was estrangement from the influence of the senses,—those senses which were enslaved to the material elements of the world; an approximation to the essence of the Deity, by a total secession from the affairs, the interests, the passions, the thoughts, the common being, and nature of man. The practical operation of this elementary principle of Eastern religion has deeply influenced the whole history of man. But it had made no progress in Europe till after the introduction of Christianity. The manner in which it allied itself with, or rather incorporated itself into, a system, to the original nature and design of which it appears altogether foreign, will form a most important and perhaps not uninteresting chapter in the History of Christianity.

Celibacy.

Celibacy was the offspring of Asceticism, but it does not appear absolutely essential to it; whether insulted nature re-asserts its rights, and reconciles to the practice that which is in apparent opposition to the theory, or whether it revenges, as it were, this rebellion of nature on one point, by its more violent and successful

(1) See the tracts of Mahony, Joinville, Hodgson, and Wilson, in the *Asiatic Researches*; Schmidt, *Geschichte der Ost Mongolen*. Bergman, *Nomadische Streifereien*, etc.

(2) Hyde, *de Relig. Persarum*, p. 13. et alibi.

Kleuker, *Anhang zum Zendavesta*, vol. i. p. 116. 117. De Guigniaut, *Religions de l'Antiquité*, I. ii. c. 3. p. 333.

(3) Kleuker, *Anhang zum Zendavesta*, vol. i. pt. 2. p. 147. De Guigniaut, *ubi supra*.

invasions upon its unconquerable propensities on others. The Muni in India is accompanied by his wife, who shares his solitude, and seems to offer no impediment to his sanctity (1), though in some cases it may be that all connubial intercourse is sternly renounced. In Palestine, the Essene, in his higher state of perfection, stood in direct opposition to the spirit of the books of Moses, on which he still looked with the profoundest reverence, by altogether refraining from marriage. It was perhaps in this form that Eastern Asceticism first crept into Christianity. It assumed the elevating and attractive character of higher personal purity; it drew the line of demarcation more rigidly against the loose morality of the Heathen; it afforded the advantage of detaching the first itinerant preachers of Christianity more entirely from worldly interests; enabled them to devote their whole undistracted attention to the propagation of the Faith, and left them, as it were, more at loose from the world, ready to break the few and slender ties which connected them with it at the first summons to a glorious martyrdom (2). But it was not, as we shall presently observe, till Gnosticism began to exercise its influence on Christianity (3) that, emulous of its dangerous rival, or infected with its foreign opinions, the Church, in its general sentiment, espoused and magnified the pre-eminent virtue of celibacy (4).

The European mind of the older world, as represented by the Greeks and Romans, repelled for a long time, in the busy turmoil of political development, and the absorbing career of war and conquest, this principle of inactivity and secession from the ordinary affairs of life. No sacerdotal caste established this principle of superiority over the active warrior, or even the laborious husbandman. With the citizen of the stirring and factious republics of Greece, the highest virtue was of a purely political and practical character. The whole man was public: his individuality, the sense of which was continually suggested and fostered under the other system, was lost in the member of the commonwealth. That which contributed nothing to the service of the state was held in no re-

Unknown
in Greece
and Rome.

(1) Abandoning all food eaten in towns, and all his household utensils, let him repair to the lonely wood, committing the care of his wife to his sons, or accompanied by her, if she choose to attend him. Sir W. Jones's *Menu*, vi. 3. I venture to refer to the pathetic tale of the hermit with his wife and son, from the Mahā Bhārata, in my translations from the Sanskrit.

In the very curious account of the Buddhist monks (the Σαμαναίσι—the Schamans) in Porphyrius de Abstinentiā, lib. iv. 17., the Buddhist ascetic abandons his wife; and this in general agrees with the Buddhist theory. Female contact is unlawful to the Buddha ascetic. See a curious instance in Mr. Wilson's *Hindu Theatre*—*The Toycart*. Act viii., sub fine.

(2) Clement of Alexandria, however, asserts that St. Paul was really married, but left his wife behind him, lest she should interfere with

his ministry. This is his interpretation of 1 Cor. ix. 5.

(3) Tertullian adv. Marc. i. 29. Non tingitur apud illum caro, nisi virgo, nisi vidua, nisi caelebs, nisi divortio baptismum mereretur . . . nec prescribimus sed suademus sanctitatem . . . tunc denique conjugium exercere defendentes cum inimicis accusatoris spurcitur nomine in destructionem meretoris qui proinde conjugium pro rei honestate benedixit, incrementum generis humani . . .

(4) Compare the whole argument of the third book of the Stromata of Clement of Alexandria. In one passage he condemns celibacy, as leading to misanthropy. Συνορῶ δὲ ὅπως τῇ προεστί τὸ γάμου οἱ μὲν ἀπιστοῦνται τούτου, μὴ κατὰ τὴν ἀγίαν γνώσιν, εἰς μισανθρώπιαν ὑπερβύσαν, καὶ τὸ τῆς ἀγάπης οὐχίταί παρ' αὐτοῖς. Strom. iii. 9.

spect. The mind, in its abstracted flights, obtained little honour, it was only as it worked upon the welfare, the amusement, or the glory of the republic, that its dignity was estimated. The philosopher might discuss the comparative superiority of the practical or the contemplative life, but his loftiest contemplations were occupied with realities, or what may be considered idealising those realities to a higher degree of perfection : to make good citizens was the utmost ambition of his wisdom, an Utopia was his heaven. The Cynic, who in the East, or in Europe, after it became impregnated with Eastern doctrines, would have retired into the desert to his solitary hermitage, in order to withdraw himself entirely from the common interests, sentiments, and connections of mankind ; in Greece, took up his station in the crowded forum, or pitching his tub in the midst of the concourse at the public games, inveighed against the vices and follies of mankind. Plato, if he had followed the natural bent of his genius, might have introduced, and indeed did introduce, as much as the Grecian mind was capable of imbibing, of this theory of the opposition of mind and matter, with its ordinary consequences. The communities of his older master Pythagoras, who had probably visited the East, and drank deep of the Oriental mysticism, approached in some respects nearer to the contemplative character of monastic institutions. But the active mind of the Greek predominated, and the followers of Pythagoras, instead of founding cœnobitic institutions, or secluding themselves in meditative solitude, settled some of the flourishing republics of Magna Græcia. But the great master, in whose steps Plato professed to tread more closely, was so essentially practical and unimaginative, as to bind his followers down to a less Oriental system of philosophy. While, therefore, in his *Timæus*, Plato attempted to harmonise parts of the cosmogonical theories of Asia with the more humanised mythology of Greece, the work which was more accordant to the genius of his country, was his *Republic*, in which all his idealism was, as it were, confined to the earth. Even his religion, though of much sublimer cast than the popular superstition, was yet considered chiefly in its practical operation on the welfare of the state. It was his design to elevate humanity to a higher state of moral dignity ; to cultivate the material body as well as the immaterial soul, to the height of perfection ; not to sever, as far as possible, the connection between these ill-assorted companions, or to withdraw the purer mind from its social and political sphere, into solitary and inactive communion with the Deity. In Rome, the general tendency of the national mind was still more essentially public and political. In the republic, except in a few less distinguished men, the *Lælii* and the *Attici*, even their philosophy was an intellectual recreation between the more pressing avocations of their higher duties : it was either to brace and mature the mind for fu-

Plato.

Rome.

ture service to the state, or as a solace in hours of disappointed ambition, or the haughty satiety of glory. Civil science was the end and aim of all their philosophic meditation. Like their ancient king, if they retired for communion with the Egeria of philosophy, it was in order to bring forth, on their return, more ample stores of political and legislative wisdom. Under the imperial government, they took refuge in the lofty reveries of the porch, as they did in inordinate luxury, from the degradation and enforced inactivity of servitude. They fled to the philosophic retirement, from the barrenness, in all high or stirring emotions, which had smitten the Senate and the Comitia; still looking back with a vain but lingering hope that the state might summon them again from retirement without dignity, from a contemplative life, which by no means implied an approximation to the divine, but rather a debasement, of the human nature. Some, indeed, degraded their high tone of philosophy by still mingling in the servile politics of the day; Seneca lived and died the votary and the victim of court intrigue. The Thræseas stood aloof, not in extatic meditation on the primal Author of Being, but on the departed liberties of Rome; their soul aspired no higher than to unite itself with the ancient genius of the republic.

Orientalism had made considerable progress towards the West before the appearance of Christianity. While the popular Pharisaism of the Jews had embodied some of the more practical tenets of Zoroastrianism, the doctrines of the remoter East had found a welcome reception with the Essene. Yet even with him, regular and unintermitting labour, not inert and meditative abstraction, was the principle of the ascetic community. It might almost seem that there subsisted some secret and indelible congeniality, some latent consanguinity, whether from kindred, common descent, or from conquest, between the caste-divided population on the shores of the Ganges, and the same artificial state of society in the valley of the Nile, so as to assimilate in so remarkable a manner their religion (1). It is certain, that the genuine Indian mysticism first established a permanent western settlement in the deserts of Egypt. Its first combination seems to have been with the Egyptian Judaism of Alexandria, and to have arisen from the dreaming Platonism, which in the schools of that city had been engrafted on the Mosaic institutes. The Egyptian monks were the lineal descendants of the Jewish Therapeutæ, described by Philo (2). Though the Therapeutæ, like the Essenes, were in some respects a productive community, yet they approached much nearer to the contemplative and indolent fraternities of the farther East.

Orientalism in Western Asia.

(1) Böhlen's work, *Das alte Indien*, of which the excellence in all other respects, as a condensed abstract of all that our own countrymen and the scholars of Germany and France have collect-

ed concerning India, will be universally acknowledged, is written to maintain the theory of the early connection of India and Egypt.

(2) *Philonis Opera*. Mangrey, vol. ii. p. 471.

The arid and rocky desert around them was too stubborn to make much return to their less regular and systematic cultivation; visionary indolence would grow upon them by degrees. The communities either broke up into the lairs of solitary hermits, or were constantly throwing off their more enthusiastic votaries deeper into the desert: the severer mortifications of the flesh required a more complete isolation from the occupations, as well as the amusements or enjoyments of life. To change the wilderness into a garden by patient industry, was to enthrall the spirit in some degree to the service of the body; and in process of time, the principle was carried to its height. The more dreary the wilderness, the more unquestioned the sanctity of its inhabitant; the more complete and painful the privation, the more holy the worshipper: the more the man put off his own nature, and sank below the animal to vegetative existence, the more consummate his spiritual perfection. The full growth of this system was of a much later period; it did not come to maturity till after Christianity had passed through its conflict with Gnosticism; but its elements were, no doubt, floating about in the different western regions of Asia, and either directly through Gnosticism, or from the emulation of the two sects, which outbid each other, as it were, in austerity, it worked, at length, into the very intimate being of the Gospel religion.

Combina-
tion of Ori-
entalism
with
Christi-
anity.

The singular felicity, the skill and dexterity, if we may so speak, with which Christianity at first wound its way through these conflicting elements, combining what was pure and lofty in each, in some instances unavoidably speaking their language, and simplifying, harmonising, and modifying each to its own peculiar system, increases our admiration of its unrivalled wisdom, its deep insight into the universal nature of man, and its pre-acquaintance, as it were, with the countless diversities of human character, prevailing at the time of its propagation. But, unless the same profound wisdom had watched over its inviolable preservation, which presided over its origin; unless it had been constantly administered with the same superiority to the common passions and interests, and speculative curiosity of man, a reaction of the several systems over which it prevailed was inevitable. On a wide and comprehensive survey of the whole history of Christianity, and considering it as left altogether to its own native force and impulse, it is difficult to estimate how far the admission, even the predominance, of these foreign elements, by which it was enabled to maintain its hold on different ages and races, may not have contributed both to its original success and its final permanence. The Eastern asceticism outbid Christianity in that austerity, that imposing self-sacrifice, that intensity of devotion, which acts with the greatest rapidity, and secures the most lasting authority over rude and unenlightened minds. By coa-

lessing to a certain point with its antagonist, it embraced within its expanding pale those who would otherwise, according to the spirit of their age, have been carried beyond its sphere by some enthusiasm more popular, and better suited to the genius of the time, or the temperament of the individual. If it lost in purity, it gained in power, perhaps, in permanence. No doubt, in its first contest with Orientalism were sown those seeds which grew up at a later period into Monasticism; it rejected the tenets, but admitted the more insidious principle of Gnosticism; yet there can be little doubt that in the dark ages, the monastic spirit was among the great conservative and influential elements of Christianity.

The form in which Christianity first encountered this wide-spread Orientalism, was either Gnosticism (1), or, if that philosophy had not then become consolidated into a system, those opinions which subsequently grew up into that prevalent doctrine of Western Asia. The first Orientalist was Simon Magus. In the conflict with St. Peter, related in the Acts, nothing transpires as to the personal history of this remarkable man, excepting the extensive success with which he had practised his magical arts in Samaria, and the oriental title which he assumed—"the Power of God." His first overtures to the Apostle appear as though he were desirous of conciliating the friendship and favour of the new teacher, and would not have been unwilling to have acted a subordinate part in the formation of their increasing sect. But from his first rejection, Simon Magus was an opponent, if there be any truth in the wild legends, which are still extant, the rival, of Christianity (2). On the arrival of the Christian teachers in Samaria, where, up to that period, his influence had predominated, he paid homage to the reality of their miracles, by acknowledging their superiority to his own. Still, it should seem that he only considered them as more adroit wonder-workers, or, as is more probable, possessed of some peculiar secrets beyond his own knowledge of the laws of nature, or, possibly (for imposture and superstition are ever closely allied), he may have supposed that they had intercourse with more powerful spirits or intelligences than his own. Jesus was to him either some extraordinary proficient in magic, who had imparted his prevailing gifts to his followers, the Apostles; or some superior genius, who lent himself to their bidding; or what Simon asserted himself to be, some power emanating more directly from the primal Deity. The "gift of the

Simon
Magus

(1) In this view of Gnosticism, besides constant reference to the original authorities, I must acknowledge my obligations to Brucker, *Hist. Phil.* vol. ii. p. 1. c. 3.; to Mosheim, *de Reb. Christ. ante Const. Mag.*; to Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*; but above all to the excellent *Histoire du Gnosticisme*, by M. Mutter, of Strasbourg, 2 vols. 8vo. Paris, 1828.

(2) It is among the most hopeless difficulties in early Christian history to decide, to one's own

satisfaction, what groundwork of truth there may be in those works which bear the name of St. Clement, and relate the contests of St. Peter and Simon Magus. That in their present form they are a kind of religious romance, few will doubt; but they are certainly of great antiquity, and it is difficult to suppose either pure invention or mere embellishments of the simple history in the Acts.

Holy Ghost" seemed to communicate a great portion, at least, of this magic influence, and to place the initiated in possession of some mighty secrets, or to endow him with the control of some potent spirits. Simon's offer of pecuniary remuneration betrays at once either that his own object was sordid, as he suspected theirs to be, or, at the highest, he sought to increase, by a combination with them, his own reputation and influence. Nor, on the indignant refusal of St. Peter, does his entreaty for their prayers, lest he should incur the wrath of their offended Deity, by any means imply a more accurate and Christian conception of their religion; it is exactly the tone of a man, half imposter and half enthusiast, who trembles before the offended anger of some mightier superhuman being, whom his ineffectual magic has no power to control or to appease. We collect no more than this from the narrative in the Acts (1).

Yet, unless Simon was in fact a personage of considerable importance during the early history of Christianity, it is difficult to account for his becoming, as he is called by Beausobre, the hero of the Romance of Heresy. If Simon was the same with that magician, a Cypriot by birth, who was employed by Felix as agent in his intrigue to detach Drusilla from her husband (2), this part of his character accords with the charge of licentiousness advanced both against his life and his doctrines by his Christian opponents. This is by no means improbable; and indeed, even if he was not a person thus politically prominent and influential, the early writers of Christianity would scarcely have concurred in representing him as a formidable and dangerous antagonist of the Faith, as a kind of personal rival of St. Peter, without some other groundwork for the fiction besides the collision recorded in the Acts. The doctrines which are ascribed to him and to his followers, who continued to exist for several centuries (3), harmonise with the glimpse of his character and tenets in the writings of St. Luke. Simon probably was one of that class of adventurers which abounded at this period, or, like Apollonius of Tyana, and others at a later time, with whom the opponents of Christianity attempted to confound Jesus and his Apostles. His doctrine was Oriental in its language and in its pretensions (4). He was the first Æon or emanation, or rather perhaps the first manifestation of the primal Deity. He assumed not merely the title of the Great Power or Virtue of God, but all the other appellations, — the Word, the Perfection, the Paraclete, the Almighty, the whole combined attributes of the Deity (5). He had a companion,

His real character and tenets.

(1) Acts, viii. 9-24.

(2) Joseph. Ant. xx. 5. 2. Compare Krebs and Kuinoël, in loco Act. Apost.

(3) Origen denies the existence of living Simonians in his day (contra Celso, lib. i.); which implies that they had subsisted nearly up to that time.

(4) Irenæus, lib. i. c. 20.; the fullest of the

early authorities on Simon. Compare Grabe's notes. The personal conflict with St. Peter in Rome, and the famous inscription, "Simonis Sancti," must I think be abandoned to legend.

(5) Ego sum Sermo Dei, ego sum Speciosus, ego Paracletus, ego Omnipotens, ego omnia Dei. Hieronym. in Matth. Op. iv. 114.

Helena, according to the statement of his enemies, a beautiful prostitute (1), whom he found at Tyre, who became in like manner the first conception (the *Eanœa*) of the Deity: but who, by her conjunction with matter, had been enslaved to its malignant influence, and having fallen under the power of evil angels, had been in a constant state of transmigration, and among other mortal bodies, had occupied that of the famous Helen of Troy. Beausobre (2), who elevates Simon into a Platonic philosopher, explains the Helena as a sublime allegory. She was the Psyche of his philosophic romance. The soul, by evil influences, had become imprisoned in matter. By her the Deity had created the angels: the angels, enamoured of her, had inextricably entangled her in that polluting bondage in order to prevent her return to heaven. To fly from their embraces, she had passed from body to body. Connecting this fiction with the Grecian mythology, she was Minerva, or impersonated Wisdom; perhaps, also, Helena, or embodied Beauty.

His Helena.

It is by no means inconsistent with the character of Orientalism, or with the spirit of the times, to reconcile much of these different theories. According to the Eastern system of teaching by symbolic action, Simon may have carried about a living and real illustration of his allegory: his Helena may have been to his disciples the mystic image of an emanation from the divine Mind; her native purity, indeed, originally defiled by the contagious malignity of matter, but under the guidance of the Hierophant, or rather by her sanctifying association with the "Power of God," either soaring again to her primal sanctity, or even while the grosser body was still abandoned to its inalienable corruption, emancipating the uninfected and unparticipant soul from all the deprivation, almost from the consciousness, of corporal indulgence. Be this as it may; whether the opinions of Simon were derived from Platonism, or, as it is much more likely, immediately from Eastern sources, his history is singularly characteristic of the state of the public mind at this period of the world. An individual assuming the lofty appellation of the Power of God, and with his female associate, personating the male and female Energies or Intelligences of the Deity, appears to our colder European reason a fiction too monstrous even for the proverbial credulity of man. But this Magianism of Simon must be considered in reference to the whole theory of theurgy or magic, and the prevalent theosophy or notions of the divine nature. In the East, superstition had in general repudiated the grossly material forms in which the Western anthropomorphism had embodied its gods; it remained more spiritual, but it made up for this by the fantastic manner in which it multiplied the gradations of spiritual being more or less remotely connected with the first great Supreme.

Probability of the history of Simon.

1; Irenæus, *ibid.*

(2) Beausobre, *Hist. du Manichéisme*, i. 35.

The more subtle the spirits, in general, they were the more beneficent; the more intimately associated with matter, the more malignant. The avowed object of Simon was to destroy the authority of the evil spirits, and to emancipate mankind from their control. This peopling of the universe with a regularly descending succession of beings was common to the whole East, perhaps, in great part, to the West. The later Jewish doctrine of angels and devils approached nearly to it; it lurked in Platonism, and assumed a higher form in the Eastern cosmogonies. In these it not merely assigned guardian or hostile beings to individuals or to nations, but its peculiar creator to the material universe, from which it aspired altogether to keep aloof the origin and author of the spiritual world; though the latter superior and benignant Being was ordinarily introduced as interfering in some manner to correct, to sanctify, and to spiritualise the world of man; and it was in accordance with this part of the theory, that Simon proclaimed himself the representative of Deity.

But Simon was at no time a Christian, neither was the heir and successor of his doctrines, Menander (1); and it was not till it had made some progress in the Syrian and Asiatic cities, that Christianity came into closer contact with those Gnostic, or pregnostic systems, which, instead of opposing it with direct hostility, received it with more insidious veneration, and warped it into an unnatural accordance with its own principles. As the Jew watched the appearance of Jesus, and listened to his announcement as the Messiah, in anxious suspense, expecting that even yet he would assume those attributes of temporal grandeur and visible majesty which, according to his conceptions, were inseparable from the true Messiah; as even after the death of Jesus, the Jewish Christians still eagerly anticipated his immediate return to judgment, his millennial reign, and his universal dominion: so many of the Oriental speculatists, as soon as Christianity began to be developed, hailed it as the completion of their own wild theories; and forced it into accordance with their universal tenet of distinct intelligences emanating from the primal Being. Thus Christ, who, to the vulgar Jew was to be a temporal king, to the Cabalist or the Chaldean became a Sephiroth, an Æon, an emanation from the One Supreme. While the author of the religion remained on earth, and while the religion itself was still in its infancy, Jesus was in danger of being degraded into a king of the Jews; his Gospel of becoming the code of a new religious republic. Directly it got beyond the borders of Palestine, and the name of Christ had acquired sanctity and veneration in the Eastern cities, he became a kind of metaphysical impersonation,

Gnosticism
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Christi-
anity.

(1) Menander baptized in his own name, being sent by the *Supreme Power* of God. His baptism conferred a resurrection not only to eternal life but to eternal youth. An opinion, as M. Mattei

justly observes, not easily reconcilable to those who considered the body the unworthy prison of the soul. Irenæus, i. 21. Matter, i. 219.

while the religion lost its purely moral cast, and assumed the character of a speculative theogony.

Ephesus is the scene of the first collision between Christianity and Orientalism, of which we can trace any authentic record. Ephesus, we have before described as the great emporium of magic arts, and the place where the unwieldy allegory of the East lingered in the bosom of the more elegant Grecian Humanism (1). Here the Greek, the Oriental, the Jew, the philosopher, the magician, the follower of John the Baptist, the teacher of Christianity, were no doubt encouraged to settle by the peaceful opulence of the inhabitants, and the constant influx of strangers, under the proudly indifferent protection of the municipal authorities and the Roman government. In Ephesus according to universal tradition, survived the last of the Apostles, and here the last of the Gospels—some have supposed the latest of the writings of the new Testament,—appeared in the midst of his struggle with the foreign elements of conflicting systems. This Gospel was written, we conceive, not against any peculiar sect or individual, but to arrest the spirit of Orientalism which was working into the essence of Christianity, destroying its beautiful simplicity, and threatening altogether to change both its design and its effects upon mankind. In some points, it necessarily spoke the language, which was common alike, though not precisely with the same meaning, to the Platonism of the West and the Theogonism of the East; but its sense was different and peculiar. It kept the moral and religious, if not altogether distinct from the physical notions, yet clearly and invariably predominant. While it appropriated the well-known and almost universal term, the Logos, or Word of God, to the divine author of Christianity, and even adopted some of the imagery from the hypothesis of conflicting light and darkness; yet it altogether rejected all the wild cosmogonical speculations on the formation of the world; it was silent on that elementary distinction of the Eastern creed, the separation of matter from the ethereal mind. The union of the soul with the Deity, though in the writings of John it takes something of a mystic tone, is not the pantheistic absorption into the parent Deity; it is an union by the aspiration of the pious heart, the conjunction by pure and holy love with the Deity, who, to the extatic moral affection of the adorer, is himself pure love. It insists not on abstraction from matter, but from sin, from hatred, from all fierce and corrupting passions; its new life is active as well as meditative; a social principle, which incorporates together all pure and holy men, and conjoins them with their federal head, Christ, the image and representative of the God of Love; it is no principle

Ephesus

St. John.

II.
Gospel.

(1) The Temple of Diana was the triumph of pure Grecian architecture: but her statue was not that of the divine Huntress, like that twin sister of the Belvedere Apollo in the gallery at

Paris; she was the Diana multimanus, the emblematic impersonation of all-productive, all-nutritive, Nature.

of isolation in solitary and rapturous meditation; it is a moral not an imaginative purity.

Among the opponents to the holy and sublime Christianity of St. John, during his residence at Ephesus, the names of the Nicolaitans and of Cerinthus alone have survived (1). Of the tenets of the former, and the author of the doctrine, nothing precise is known; but the indignant language with which they are alluded to in the Sacred Writings implies that they were not merely hostile to the abstract doctrines, but also to the moral effects of the Gospel. Nor does it appear quite clear that the Nicolaitans were a distinct and organised sect.

Cerinthus was the first of whose tenets we have any distinct statement, who, admitting the truth of Christianity, attempted to incorporate with it foreign and Oriental tenets (2). Cerinthus was of Jewish descent, and educated in the Judæo-Platonic school of Alexandria (3). His system was a singular and, apparently, incongruous fusion of Jewish, Christian, and Oriental notions. He did not, like Simon or Menander, invest himself in a sacred and mysterious character, though he pretended to angelic revelations (4). Like all the Orientals, his imagination was haunted with the notion of the malignity of matter; and his object seems to have been to keep both the primal Being and the Christ uninfected with its contagion. The Creator of the material world, therefore, was a secondary being—an angel or angels; as Cerinthus seems to have adhered to the Jewish, and not adopted the Oriental language (5). But his national and hereditary reverence for the law withheld him from that bold and hostile step which was taken by most of the other Gnostic sects, to which, no doubt, the general animosity to the Jews in Syria and Egypt concurred,—the identification of the God of the Jewish covenant with the inferior and malignant author of the material creation. He retained, according to one account, his reverence for the rites, the ceremonies, the law, and the prophets, of Judaism (6), to which he was probably reconciled by the allegoric interpretations of Philo. The Christ, in his theory, was of a higher order than those secondary and subordinate beings who had presided over the older world. But, with the jealousy of all the

(1) General tradition derived the Nicolaitans from Nicolas, one of the seven deacons. Acts, vi. 5. Eusebius (Eccl. Hist. i. iii. c. 29.) relates a story that Nicolas, accused of being jealous of his beautiful wife, offered her in matrimony to whoever chose to take her. His followers, on this example, founded the tenet of promiscuous concubinage. Wetstein, with whom Michaelis and Rosenmüller are inclined to agree, supposed that Nicolas was a translation of the Hebrew word Bileam, both signifying, in their respective languages, the subduer or the destroyer of the people. Michaelis, Eichhorn, and Storr, suppose, therefore, that it was the name rather of a sect than an individual, and the same with those

mentioned 2 Pet. ii, 10. 13. 18.; iii. 3.; Jud. 8. 16. See Rosenmüller on Rev. ii. 6.

(2) See Mosheim, de Rebus ante C. M. p. 199. Matter, i. 221.

(3) Theodoret, ii. c. 3.

(4) Eusebius, E. H. iii. 28., from Cains the presbyter, *παραποροῦντας ἡμῖν ὡς δι' αἰγύλιων αὐτῶν διδραχμῶν ψευδομένους.*

(5) Epiphanius Her. viii. 28. According to Irenæus, a virtute quadam valde separata, et distante ab ea principalitate quæ est super universa et ignorante eum qui est super omnia Deum. Iren. i. 25.

(6) Inferior angels to those of the law inspired the prophets.

Gnostic sects, lest the pure emanation from the Father should be unnecessarily contaminated by too intimate a conjunction with a material and mortal form, he relieved him from the degradation of a human birth, by supposing that the Christ descended on the man Jesus at his baptism; and from the ignominy of a mortal death, by making him reascend before that crisis, having accomplished his mission of making known "the Unknown Father," the pure and primal Being, of whom the worshippers of the Creator of the material universe, and of the Jehovah of the Jews, were alike ignorant. But the most inconsequential part of the doctrine of Cerinthus was his retention of the Jewish doctrine of the millennium. It must, indeed, have been purified from some of its grosser and more sensual images; for the Christos, the immaterial emanation from the Father was to preside during its long period of harmony and peace (1).

The later Gnostics were bolder but more consistent innovators on the simple scheme of Christianity. It was not till the second century that the combination of Orientalism with Christianity was matured into the more perfect Gnosticism. This was, perhaps, at its height from about the year 120 to 140. In all the great cities of the East, in which Christianity had established its most flourishing communities, sprung up this rival, which aspired to a still higher degree of knowledge than was revealed in the Gospel, and boasted that it soared almost as much above the vulgar Christianity as the vulgar Paganism. Antioch, where the first church of the Christians had been opened, beheld the followers of Saturninus withdrawing, in a proud assurance of their superiority, from the common brotherhood of believers, and insulating themselves as the gifted possessors of still higher spiritual secrets. Edessa, whose king very early Christian fable had exalted into a personal correspondent with the Saviour, rung with the mystic hymns of Bardesanes; to the countless religious and philosophical factions of Alexandria were added those of Basilides and Valentinus; until a still more unscrupulous and ardent enthusiast, Marcion of Pontus, threw aside in disdain the whole existing religion of the Gospel, remodelled the sacred books, and established himself as the genuine hierophant of the real Christian mysteries.

Gnosticism, though very different from Christianity, was of a sublime and imposing character, as an imaginative creed, and not more unreasonable than the other attempts of human reason to solve the inexplicable secret, the origin of evil. Though variously modified, the systems of the different teachers were essentially the same. The primal Deity remained aloof in his unapproachable ma-

Later
Gnostics.

The pri-
mal Deity
of Gnos-
ticism.

(1) Cerinthus was considered by some early writers the author of the Apocalypse, because that work appeared to contain his grosser doc-

trine of the millennial reign of Christ. Dionysius apud Euseb. iii. 282.; vii. 25.

The Pleroma.

 jesty; the unspeakable, the ineffable, the nameless, the self-existing (1). The Pleroma, the fulness of the Godhead, expanded itself in still outspreading circles, and approached, till it comprehended, the universe. From the Pleroma emanated all spiritual being, and to him they were to return and mingle again in indissoluble unity. By their entanglement in malign and hostile matter—the source of moral as well as physical evil—all outwardly existing beings had degenerated from their high origin; their redemption from this foreign bondage, their restoration to purity and peace in the bosom of Divinity, the universal harmony of all immaterial existence, thus resolved again into the Pleroma, was the merciful design of the

The Æon Christ.

 Æon Christ, who had for this purpose invaded and subdued the foreign and hostile provinces of the Energy, or Deity of matter.

Malignity of matter.

 In all the Oriental sects, this primary principle, the malignity of matter, haunted the imagination; and to this principle every tenet must be accommodated. The sublimest doctrines of the Old Testament—the creative omnipotence, the sovereignty, the providence of God, as well as the grosser and anthropomorphic images, in which the acts and passions, and even the form of man, are assigned to the Deity,—fell under the same remorseless proscription. It was pollution, it was degradation to the pure and elementary spirit, to mingle with, to approximate, to exercise even the remotest influence over, the material world. The creation of the visible universe was made over, according to all, to a secondary, with most, to a hostile Demiurge. The hereditary reverence which had modified the opinions of Cerinthus, with regard to the Jehovah of his fathers, had no hold on the Syrian and Egyptian speculatists. They fearlessly pursued their system to its consequences, and the whole of the Old Testament was abandoned to the inspiration of an inferior and evil dæmon; the Jews were left in exclusive possession

Rejection of the Old Testament.

 of their national Deity, whom the Gnostic Christians disdained to acknowledge as bearing any resemblance to the abstract, remote, and impassive Spirit. To them, the mission of Christ revealed a Deity altogether unknown in the dark ages of a world which was the creation and the domain of an inferior being. They would not, like the philosophising Jews, take refuge in allegory to explain the too material images of the works of the Deity in the act of creation, and his subsequent rest; the intercourse with man in the garden of Eden; the trees of knowledge and of life; the Serpent, and the Fall; they rejected the whole as altogether extraneous to Christianity, belonging to another world, with which the God revealed by Christ had no concern or relation. If they condescended to discuss

(1) The Author of the Apostolic Constitutions asserts, as the first principle of all the early heresies, τὸν μὲν παντοκράτορα Θεὸν ἐλαττωμένον, ἀγνωστον δοξάζειν. καὶ μὴ

εἶναι Πατέρα τοῦ Χριστοῦ, μηδὲ τοῦ κόσμου δημιουργόν, ἀλλ' ἄλεκτον, ἄρρητον, ἀκαταόμαστον, αὐτογενέθρον Lib. vi. c. 10.

the later Jewish history, it was merely to confirm their preconceived notions. The apparent investiture of the Jehovah with the state and attributes of a temporal sovereign, the imperfection of the law, the barbarity of the people, the bloody wars in which they were engaged,—in short, whatever in Judaism was irreconcilable with a purely intellectual and morally perfect system, argued its origin from an imperfect and secondary author.

But some tenets of primitive Christianity came no less into direct collision with the leading principles of Orientalism. The human nature of Jesus was too deeply impressed upon all the Gospel history, and perplexed the whole school, as well the precursors of Gnosticism as the more perfect Gnostics. His birth and death bore equal evidence to the unspiritualised materialism of his mortal body. They seized with avidity the distinction between the divine and human nature; but the Christ, the *Æon*, which emanated from the pure and primal Deity, as yet unknown in the world of the inferior creator, must be relieved as far as possible from the degrading and contaminating association with the mortal Jesus. The simpler hypothesis of the union of the two natures, mingled up, too closely, according to their views, the ill-assorted companions. The human birth of Jesus, though guarded by the virginity of his mother, was still offensive to their subtler and more fastidious purity. The Christ, therefore, the Emanation from the Pleroma, descended upon the man Jesus at his baptism. The death of Jesus was a still more serious cause of embarrassment. They seem never to have entertained the notion of an expiatory sacrifice; and the connection of the ethereal mind with the pains and sufferings of a carnal body, was altogether repulsive to their strongest prejudices. Before the death, therefore, of Jesus, the Christ had broken off his temporary association with the perishable body of Jesus, and surrendered it to the impotent resentment of Pilate and of the Jews; or, according to the theory of the Docetæ, adopted by almost all the Gnostic sects, the whole union with the material human form was an illusion upon the senses of men; it was but an apparent human being, an impassive phantom, which *seemed* to undergo all the insults and the agony of the cross.

Of some
parts of
the New.

Such were the general tenets of the Gnostic sects, emanating from one simple principle. But the details of their cosmogony, their philosophy, and their religion, were infinitely modified by local circumstances, by the more or less fanciful genius of their founders, and by the stronger infusion of the different elements of Platonism, Kabalism, or that which, in its stricter sense, may be called Orientalism. The number of circles, or emanations, or procreations, which intervened between the spiritual and the material world; the nature and the rank of the Creator of that material world; his more or less close identification with the Jehovah of Judaism;

the degree of malignity which they attributed to the latter; the office and the nature of the Christos,—these were open points, upon which they admitted or, at least, assumed, the utmost latitude.

Saturni-
nus.

The earliest of the more distinguished Gnostics is Saturninus, who is represented as a pupil of Menander, the successor of Simon Magus (1). But this Samaritan sect was always in direct hostility with Christianity, while Saturninus departed less from the Christian system than most of the wilder and more imaginative teachers of Gnosticism. The strength of the Christian party in Antioch may in some degree have overawed and restrained the aberrations of his fancy. Saturninus did not altogether exclude the primal spiritual Being from all concern or interest in the material world. For the Creator of the visible universe, he assumed the seven great angels, which the later Jews had probably borrowed, though with different powers, from the seven Amschaspands of Zoroastrianism. Neither were these angels essentially evil, nor was the domain on which they exercised their creative power altogether surrendered to the malignity of matter; it was a kind of debateable ground between the powers of evil and of good. The historian of Gnosticism has remarked the singular beauty of the fiction regarding the creation of man. “The angels tried their utmost efforts to form man; but there arose under their creative influence only ‘a worm creeping upon the earth.’ God, condescending to interpose, sent down his Spirit, which breathed into the reptile the living soul of man.” It is not quite easy to connect with this view of the origin of man the tenets of Saturninus, that the human kind was divided into two distinct races, the good and the bad. Whether the latter became so from receiving a feebler and less influential portion of the divine Spirit, or whether they were a subsequent creation of Satan, who assumes the station of the Ahriman of the Persian system (2). But the descent of Christ was to separate finally these two conflicting races. He was to rescue the good from the predominant power of the wicked; to destroy the kingdom of the spirits of evil, who, emanating in countless numbers from Satan their chief, waged a fatal war against the good; and to elevate them far above the power of the chief of the angels, the God of the Jews, for whose imperfect laws were to be substituted the purifying principles of Asceticism, by which the children of light, were re-united to the source and origin of light. The Christ himself was the Supreme Power of God, immaterial, incorporeal, formless, but assuming the *semblance* of man; and his followers were, as far as possible, to detach them-

(1) On Saturninus, see Irenæus, i. 22.; Euseb. iv. 7.; Epiphani. Her. 23.; Theodoret, Her. Fab. lib. iii.; Tertullian de Anima, 23.; de Præscrip. cont. Her. c. 46. Of the moderns, Mosheim, p. 336.; Matter, i. 276.

(2) The latter opinion is that of Mosheim. M. Matter, on the contrary, says,—“Satan n’a pourtant pas créé les hommes, et les a trouvés tout faits: il s’en est emparé; c’est là sa sphère d’activité et la limite de sa puissance. p. 285.”

selves from their corporeal bondage, and assimilate themselves to his spiritual being. Marriage was the invention of Satan and his evil spirits, or at best, of the great angel, the God of the Jews, in order to continue the impure generation. The elect were to abstain from propagating a race of darkness and imperfection. Whether Saturninus, with the Essenes, maintained this total abstinence as the especial privilege of the higher class of his followers, and permitted to the less perfect the continuation of their kind, or whether he abandoned altogether this perilous and degrading office to the wicked, his system appears incomplete, as it seems to yield up as desperate the greater part of the human race; to perpetuate the dominion of evil; and to want the general and final absorption of all existence into the purity and happiness of the primal Being.

Alexandria, the centre, as it were, of the speculative and intellectual activity of the Roman world, to which ancient Egypt, Asia, Palestine, and Greece, furnished the mingled population of her streets, and the conflicting opinions of her schools, gave birth to the two succeeding, and most widely disseminated sects of Gnosticism, those of Basilides and Valentinus.

Alexan-
dria.

Basilides was a Syrian by birth, and by some is supposed to have been a scholar of Menander, at the same time with Saturninus. He claimed, however, Glaucias, a disciple of St. Peter, as his original teacher; and his doctrines assumed the boastful title of the Secret Traditions of the great Apostle. He also had some ancient prophecies, those of Cham and Barkaph (1), peculiar to his sect. According to another authority, he was a Persian; but this may have originated from the Zoroastrian cast of his primary tenets (2). From the Zendavesta, Basilides drew the eternal hostility of mind and matter, of light and darkness; but the Zoroastrian doctrine seems to have accommodated itself to the kindred systems of Egypt. In fact, the Gnosticism of Basilides appears to have been a fusion of the ancient sacerdotal religion of Egypt with the angelic and dæmonic theory of Zoroaster. Basilides did not, it seems, maintain his one abstract unapproachable Deity far above the rest of the universe, but connected him, by a long and insensible gradation of intellectual developments or manifestations, with the visible and material world. From the Father proceeded seven beings, who together with him made up an ogdoad; constituted the first scale of intellectual beings, and inhabited the highest heaven, the purest intellectual sphere. According to their names—Mind, Reason, Intelligence (*Φρόνησις*), Wisdom, Power, Justice, and Peace,—they are merely, in our language, the attributes of the Deity, impersonated in this system.

Basilide

(1) Irenæus differs in his view of the Basilidian theory, from the remains of the Basilidian books appended to by Clement of Alexandria, Strom. vi. p. 375. 795.; Theodorët, Hæret. Fabul. i. 2.; Euseb. E. R. iv. 7. Basilides publish-

ed twenty-four volumes of exegetica, or interpretations of his doctrines.

(2) Clemens, Stromata, vi. 642. Euseb. H. E. iv. 7.

The number of these primary Æons is the same as the Persian system of the Deity and the seven Amschaspands, and the Sephiroth of the Kabbala, and, probably, as far as that abstruse subject is, known, of the ancient Egyptian theology (1).

The seven primary effluxes of the Deity went on producing and multiplying, each forming its own realm or sphere, till they reached the number of 365 (2). The total number formed the mystical Abraxas (3), the legend which is found on so many of the ancient gems, the greater part of which are of Gnostic origin; though as much of this theory was from the doctrines of ancient Egypt, not only the mode of expressing their tenets by symbolic inscriptions, but even the inscription itself, may be originally Egyptian (4). The lowest of these worlds bordered on the realm of matter. The first confusion and invasion of the hostile elements took place. At length the chief angel of this sphere, on the verge of intellectual being, was seized with a desire of reducing the confused mass to order. With his assistant angels, he became the Creator. Though the form was of a higher origin, it was according to the idea of Wisdom, who, with the Deity, formed part of the first and highest ogdoad. Basilides professed the most profound reverence for divine Providence; and in Alexandria, the God of the Jews, softened off, as it were, and harmonised to the philosophic sentiment by the school of Philo, was looked upon in a less hostile light than by the Syrian and Asiatic school. The East lent its system of guardian angels, and the assistant angels of the Demiurge were the spiritual rulers of the nations, while the Creator himself was that of the Jews. Man was formed of a triple nature. His corporeal form of brute and malignant matter; his animal soul, the Psychic principle, which he received from the Demiurge; the higher and purer spirit, with which he was endowed from a loftier region. This pure and ethereal spirit was to be emancipated from its impure companionship: and Egypt, or rather, the whole East, lent the doctrine of the transmigration of souls, in order to carry this stranger upon earth through the gradations of successive purification, till it was readmitted to its parent heaven.

Basilides, in the Christian doctrine which he interwove with this

(1) See Matter, vol. ii. p. 5—37.

(2) It is difficult to suppose that this number, either as originally borrowed from the Egyptian theology, or as invented by Basilides, had not some astronomical reference.

(3) Irenæus, i. 23. See in M. Matter, ii. 49, 54, the countless interpretations of this mysterious word. We might add others to those collected by his industry. M. Matter adopts, though with some doubt, the opinion of M. Bellermin and M. Munter. Le premier de ces écrivains explique le mot "Abraxas" par le kopte, qui est incontestablement à l'ancienne langue d'Égypte ce que la grec moderne est au langage de l'ancienne Grèce. La syllabe "sadsch," que les Grecs ont dû

convertir en σαζ, ou sac, ou σαζ, n'ayant pu exprimer la dernière lettre de cette syllabe, que par les lettres X, Σ, ou Z, signifierait *parole*, et "abrak" *beni, saint, adorable*, en sorte que le mot "Abraxas" tout entier, offrirait le sens de *parole sacrée*. M. Munter ne s'éloigne de cette interprétation que pour les syllabes "abrak" qu'il prend pour le mot kopte "berra" *nouveau*, ce qui donne à l'ensemble le sens de *parole nouveau*. Matter, ii. 40.

(4) See, in the supplement to M. Matter's work, a very curious collection of these Egyptian and Egypto-Grecian medals; and a work of Dr. Walsh on these coins. Compare likewise, Reuven's Lettres à M. Letronne, particularly p. 23.

imaginative theory, followed the usual Gnostic course (1). The Christ, the first Æon of the Deity, descended on the man Jesus at his baptism; but, by a peculiar tenet of their own, the Basilidians rescued even the man Jesus from the degrading sufferings of the cross. Simon the Cyrenian was changed into the form of Jesus; on him the enemies of the crucified wasted their wrath, while Jesus stood aloof in the form of Simon, and mocked their impotent malice. Their moral perceptions must have been singularly blinded by their passion for their favourite tenet, not to discern how much they lowered their Saviour by making him thus render up an innocent victim as his own substitute.

Valentinus appears to have been considered the most formidable and dangerous of this school of Gnostics (2). He was twice excommunicated, and twice received again into the bosom of the church. He did not confine his dangerous opinions to the school of Alexandria; he introduced the wild Oriental speculations into the more peaceful West; taught at Rome; and a third time being expelled from the Christian society, retired to Cyprus, an island where the Jews were formerly numerous, till the fatal insurrection in the time of Hadrian; and where probably the Oriental philosophy might not find an unwelcome reception, on the border, as it were, of Europe and Asia (3).

Valentinus.

Valentinus annihilated the complexity of pre-existing heavens, which, perhaps, connected the system of Basilides with that of ancient Egypt, and did not interpose the same infinite number of gradations between the primal Deity and the material world. He descended much more rapidly into the sphere of Christian images and Christian language, or rather, he carried up many of the Christian notions and terms, and enshrined them in the Plerona, the region of spiritual and inaccessible light. The fundamental tenet of Orientalism, the incomprehensibility of the Great Supreme, was the essential principle of his system, and was represented in terms pregnant with mysterious sublimity. The first Father was called Bythos, the Abyss, the Depth, the Unfathomable, who dwelt alone in inscrutable and ineffable height, with his own first Conception, his Ennoia, who bore the emphatic and awful name of Silence. The first development or self-manifestation was Mind (Nous), whose appropriate consort was Aletheia or Truth. These formed the first great quaternion, the highest scale of being. From Mind and Truth proceeded the Word and Life (Logos and Zoe); their manifestations were Man and the Church, Anthropos and Ecclesia, and so

(1) Irenæus, i. 29., compared with the other authors cited above. versus Valentin. Theodoret, *Fab. Her.* i. 7. Epiphanius, *Har.* 31.

(2) Irenæus, *Her. v. Clemens.*, Alex. Strom. Origen, *de Princip. contra Celsum*. The author of the *Didascalia Orientalis*, at the end of the works of Clement of Alexandria. Tertullian ad-

(3) Tertull. *advers. Valentin.*, c. 4. Epiphanius, *Massuet.* (*Diss. in Iren.* p. 10. 14.) doubts this part of the history of Valentinus.

the first ogdoad was complete. From the Word and Life proceeded ten more Æons ; but these seem, from their names, rather qualities of the Supreme ; at least the five masculine names, for the feminine appear to imply some departure from the pure elementary and unimpassioned nature of the primal Parent. The males are—Buthios, profound, with his consort Mixis, conjunction ; Ageratos, that grows not old, with Henosis or union ; Autophyes, self-subsistent, with Hedone, pleasure ; Akinetos, motionless, with Syncrasis, commixture ; the Only Begotten and the Blessed. The offspring of Man and the Church were twelve, and in the females we seem to trace the shadowy prototypes of the Christian graces : — the Paraclete and Faith ; the Paternal and Hope ; the Maternal and Charity ; the Ever-intelligent and Prudence ; Ecclesiasticos (a term apparently expressive of church union) and Blessedness ; Will and Wisdom (Theletos and Sophia).

These thirty Æons dwelt alone within the sacred and inviolable circle of the Pleroma : they were all, in one sense, manifestations of the Deity, all purely intellectual, an universe apart. But the peace of this metaphysical hierarchy was disturbed, and here we are presented with a noble allegory, which, as it were, brings these abstract conceptions within the reach of human sympathy. The last of the dodecarchy which sprung from Man and the Church was Sophia or Wisdom. Without intercourse with her consort Will, Wisdom was seized with an irresistible passion for that knowledge and intimate union with the primal Father, the unfathomable, which was the sole privilege of the first-born, Mind. She would comprehend the incomprehensible : love was the pretext, but temerity the motive. Pressing onward under this strong impulse, she would have reached the remote sanctuary, and would finally have been absorbed into the primal Essence, had she not encountered Horus (the impersonated boundary between knowledge and the Deity). At the persuasion of this “ liminary cherub ” (to borrow Milton’s words), she acknowledged the incomprehensibility of the Father, returned in humble acquiescence to her lowlier sphere, and allayed the passion begot of wonder. But the harmony of the intellectual world was destroyed ; a redemption, a restoration, was necessary ; and (for now Valentinus must incorporate the Christian system into his own) from the first Æon, the divine Mind, proceeded Christ and the Holy Ghost. Christ communicated to the listening Æons the mystery of the imperishable nature of the Father, and their own procession from him ; the delighted Æons commemorated the restoration of the holy peace, by each contributing his most splendid gift to form Jesus, encircled with his choir of angels.

Valentinus did not descend immediately from his domain of metaphysical abstraction ; he interposed an intermediate sphere between that and the material world. The desire or passion of Sophia, im-

personated, became an inferior Wisdom; she was an outcast from the Pleroma, and lay floating in the dim and formless chaos without. The Christos in mercy gave her form and substance; she preserved, as it were, some fragrance of immortality. Her passion was still strong for higher things, for the light which she could not apprehend; and she incessantly attempted to enter the forbidden circle of the Pleroma, but was again arrested by Horus, who uttered the mystic name of Jao. Sadly she returned to the floating elements of inferior being; she was surrendered to Passion, and with his assistance produced the material world. The tears which she shed, at the thought of her outcast condition, formed the humid element; her smiles, when she thought of the region of glory, the light; her tears and her sorrows, the grosser elements. Christ descended no more to her assistance, but sent Jesus, the Paraclete, the Saviour, with his angels; and with his aid, all substance was divided into material, animal, and spiritual. The spiritual, however, altogether emanated from the light of her divine assistant; the first formation of the animal (the Psychic) was the Demiurge, the Creator, the Saviour, the Father, the king of all that was consubstantial with himself, and finally, the material, of which he was only the Demiurge or Creator. Thus were formed the seven intermediate spheres, of which the Demiurge and his assistant angels (the seven again of the Persian system), with herself, made up a second ogdoad,—the image and feeble reflection of the former; Wisdom representing the primal Parent; the Demiurge the divine Mind, though he was ignorant of his mother, more ignorant than Satan himself; the other sidereal angels, the rest of the Æons. By the Demiurge the lower world was formed. Mankind consisted of three classes: the spiritual, who are enlightened with the divine ray from Jesus; the animal or psychic, the offspring and kindred of the Demiurge; the material, the slaves and associates of Satan, the prince of the material world. They were represented, as it were, by Seth, Abel, and Cain. This organisation or distribution of mankind harmonised with tolerable facility with the Christian scheme. But by multiplying his spiritual beings, Valentinus embarrassed himself in the work of redemption or restoration of this lower and still degenerating world. With him, it was the Christos, or rather a faint image and reflection (for each of his intelligences multiplied themselves by this reflection of their being), who passed through the material form of the Virgin, like water through a tube. It was Jesus who descended upon the Saviour at his baptism, in the shape of the dove; and Valentinus admitted the common fantastic theory, with regard to the death of Jesus. At the final consummation, the latent fire would burst out (here Valentinus admitted the common theory of Zoroastrianism and Christianity) and consume the very scoria of matter; the material men, with their prince, would utterly perish in the conflagra-

tion. Those of the animal, the Psychic, purified by the divine ray imparted by the Redeemer, would, with their parent, the Demiurge, occupy the intermediate realm, there were the just men made perfect, while the great mother Sophia, would at length be admitted into the Pleroma or intellectual sphere.

Bardesanes.

Gnosticism was pure poetry, and Bardesanes was the poet of Gnosticism (1). For above two centuries, the hymns of this remarkable man, and those of his son Harmonius, enchanted the ears of the Syrian Christians, till they were expelled by the more orthodox raptures of Ephraem, the Syrian. Among the most remarkable circumstances relating to Bardesanes, who lived at the court of Abgar, king of Edessa, was his inquiry into the doctrines of the ancient Gymnosophists of India, which thus connected, as it were, the remotest East with the great family of religious speculatists; yet the theory of Bardesanes was more nearly allied to the Persian or the Chaldean; and the language of his poetry was in that fervent and amatory strain which borrows the warmest metaphors of human passion, to kindle the soul to divine love (2).

Bardesanes deserved the glory, though he did not suffer the pains, of martyrdom. Pressed by the philosopher Apollonius, in the name of his master, the Emperor Verus, to deny Christianity, he replied, "I fear not death, which I shall not escape by yielding to the wishes of the Emperor." Bardesanes had opposed with vigorous hostility the system of Marcion (3), he afterwards appears to have seceded or, outwardly conforming, to have aspired in private to become the head of another Gnostic sect, which, in contradistinction to those of Saturninus and Valentinus, may be called the Mesopotamian or Babylonian. With him, the primal Deity dwelt alone with his consort, his primary thought or conception. Their first offsprings, Æons, or emanations, were Christ and the Holy Ghost, who, in his system was feminine, and nearly allied to the Sophia, or Wisdom, of other theories; the four elements,—the dry earth, and the water, the fire, and the air,—who make up the celestial ogdoad. The Son and his partner, the Spirit or Wisdom, with the assistance of the elements, made the worlds, which they surrendered to the government of the seven planetary spirits and the sun and moon, the visible types of the primal union. Probably these, as in the other systems, made the second ogdoad; and these, with other astral influences, borrowed from the Tsabaisan of the region, the twelve signs of the zodiac, and the thirty-six Decani, as he called the rulers of the 360 days, governed the world of man. And here Bardesanes became

(1) Valentinus, according to Tertullian, wrote psalms (de Carne Christi, c. 20.); his disciple Marcus explained his system in verse, and introduced the Æons as speaking. Compare Hahn, p. 26. Bardesanes wrote 150 psalms, the number of those of David.

(2) Theodoret, Hæret. Fab. 209.

(3) According to Eusebius, E. II. v. 38., Bardesanes approached much nearer to orthodoxy, though he still "bore some tokens of the sable streams."

implicated with the eternal dispute about destiny and freewill, on which he wrote a separate treatise, and which entered into and coloured all his speculations (1). But the Wisdom which was the consort of the Son was of an inferior nature to that which dwelt with the Father. She was the Sophia Achamoth, and, faithless to her spiritual partner, she had taken delight in assisting the Demiurge in the creation of the visible world; but in all her wanderings and estrangement, she felt a constant and empassioned desire for perfect reunion with her first consort. He assisted her in her course of purification; revealed to her his more perfect light, on which she gazed with reanimating love; and the second wedding of these long estranged powers, in the presence of the parent Deity, and all the Æons and angels, formed the subject of one of his most ardent and rapturous hymns. With her, arose into the Pleroma those souls which partook of her celestial nature, and are rescued, by the descent of the Christ, according to the usual Gnostic theory, from their imprisonment in the world of matter.

Yet all these theorists preserved some decent show of respect for the Christian faith, and aimed at an amicable reconciliation between their own wild theories and the simpler Gospel. It is not improbable that most of their leaders were actuated by the ambition of uniting the higher and more intellectual votaries of the older Paganism with the Christian community; the one by an accommodation with the Egyptian, the others, with the Syrian or Chaldean; as, in later times, the Alexandrian school, with the Grecian or Platonic Paganism; and expected to conciliate all who would not scruple to engraft the few tenets of Christianity, which they reserved inviolate, upon their former belief. They aspired to retain all that was dazzling, vast, and imaginative in the cosmogonical systems of the East, and rejected all that was humiliating or offensive to the common sentiment in Christianity. The Jewish character of the Messiah gave way to a purely immaterial notion of a celestial Redeemer; the painful realities of his life and death were softened off into fantastic appearances; they yet adopted as much of the Christian language as they could mould to their views, and even disguised or mitigated their contempt or animosity to Judaism. But Marcion of Pontus (2) disclaimed all these conciliatory and temporising measures, either with Pagan, Jew, or evangelic Christian (3). With Marcion, all was hard, cold, implacable antagonism. At once a severe rationalist and a strong enthusiast, Marcion pressed the leading doctrine of the malignity of matter to its extreme speculative and practical consequences. His Creator, his providential Governor, the God of the

Marcion of
Pontus.

(1) He seems to have had an esoteric and an exoteric doctrine. Hahn, p. 22., on the authority of St. Ephrem. Compare Hahn, Bardesane's Gnosticus Syrorum princeps Hymnologus.

(2) Marcion was son of the Bishop of Sinope.

(3) On Marcion, see chiefly the five books of Tertullian adv. Marcenes; the Historian of Heresies, Irenæus, i. 27.; Epiphanius, 42.; Theodoret, i. 24.; Origen contra Cels.; Clem. Alex. iii. 425. St. Ephrem, Orat. 14. p. 468

Jews,—weak, imperfect, enthralled in matter,—was the opposite to the true God : the only virtue of men was the most rigid and painful abstinence. His doctrine proscribed all animal food but fish : it surpassed the most austere of the other Christian communities in its proscription of the amusements and pleasures of life ; it rejected marriage, from hostility to the Demiurge, whose kingdom it would not increase by peopling it with new beings enslaved to matter, to glut death with food (1). The fundamental principle of Marcion's doctrine was unfolded in his Antitheses, the Contrasts, in which he arrayed against each other the Supreme God and the Demiurge, the God of the Jews, the Old and New Testament, the Law and the Gospel (2). The one was perfect, pure, beneficent, passionless ; the other, though not unjust by nature, infected by matter,—subject to all the passions of man,—cruel, changeable ; the New Testament, especially, as remodelled by Marcion, was holy, wise, amiable ; the Old Testament, the Law, barbarous, inhuman, contradictory, and detestable. On the plundering of the Egyptians, on the massacre of the Canaanites, on every metaphor which ascribed the actions and sentiments of men to the Deity, Marcion enlarged with contemptuous superiority, and contrasted it with the tone of the Gospel. It was to rescue mankind from the tyranny of this inferior and hostile deity, that the Supreme manifested himself in Jesus Christ. This manifestation took place by his sudden appearance in the synagogue in Capernaum ; for Marcion swept away with remorseless hand all the earlier incidents in the Gospels. But the Messiah which was revealed in Christ was directly the opposite to that announced by the Prophets of the Jews, and of their God. He made no conquests ; he was not the Immanuel ; he was not the son of David ; he came not to restore the temporal kingdom of Israel. His doctrines were equally opposed : he demanded not an eye for an eye, or a tooth for a tooth ; but where one smote the right cheek, to turn the other. He demanded no sacrifices but that of the pure heart ; he enjoined not the sensual and indecent practice of multiplying the species ; he proscribed marriage. The God of the Jews, trembling for his authority, armed himself against the celestial invader of his territory ; he succeeded, in the *seeming* execution of Christ upon the cross, who, by his death, rescued the souls of the true believers from the bondage of the law ; descended to the lower regions, where he rescued, not the pious and holy patriarchs, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Jacob, Moses, David, or Solomon,—these were the adherents of the Demiurge or material creator,—but his implacable enemies, such as Cain and Esau. After the ascension of the Redeemer to heaven, the God of

(1) ὃ δὲ λόγος μὴ βουλόμενος τὸν κόσμον τὸν ὑπὸ τοῦ Δημιουργοῦ γενομένον συμπληροῦν, ἀπὶ χριστοῦ γάμου βούλονται — Clem. Alex. Strom. iii. 3. μὴ δὲ ἀντιστάειν τῷ κόσμῳ δυστυχήσαντας ἐπι-

ρους, μὴ δὲ ἐπιχρηγεῖν τῷ θανάτῳ τρόφον. c. h. vi.

(2) Marcion is accused by Rhodon apud Euseb. H. E. v. 13, of introducing two principles,—the Zoroastrian theory.

the Jews was to restore his subjects to their native land ; and his temporal reign was to commence over his faithful but inferior subjects.

The Gospel of Marcion was that of St. Luke, adapted, by many omissions, and some alterations, to his theory. Every allusion to, every metaphor from, marriage was carefully erased, and every passage amended or rejected which could in any way implicate the pure deity with the material world (1).

These were the chief of the Gnostic sects ; but they spread out into almost infinitely diversified subdivisions, distinguished by some peculiar tenet or usage. The Carpocratians were avowed Eclectics ; they worshipped, as benefactors of the human race, the images of Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, and Jesus Christ, as well as that of their own founder. By this school were received, possibly were invented, many of the astrologic or theurgic books attributed to Zoroaster and other ancient sages. The Jewish Scriptures were the works of inferior angels ; they received only the Gospel of St. Matthew. The supreme, unknown, uncreated Deity, was the Monad ; the visible world was the creation, the domain of inferior beings. But their system was much simpler, and, in some respects, rejecting generally the system of Æons or Emanations, approached much nearer to Christianity than most of the other Gnostics. The contest of Jesus Christ, who was the son of Joseph, according to their system, was a purely moral one. It revived the Oriental notion of the pre-existence of the soul : that of Jesus had a clearer and more distinct reminiscence of the original knowledge (the Gnosis), and wisdom of their celestial state ; and by communicating these notions to mankind, elevated them to the same superiority over the mundane deities. This perfection consisted in faith and charity, perhaps likewise in the extatic contemplation of the Monad. Every thing except faith and charity,—all good works, all observances of human laws, which were established by mundane authority,—were exterior, and more than indifferent. Hence, they were accused of recommending a community of property, and of women,—inferences which would be drawn from their avowed contempt for all human laws. They were accused, probably without justice, of following out these speculative opinions into practice. Of all heretics, none have borne a worse name than the followers of Carpocrates and his son and successor, Epiphanes (2).

Varieties
of Gnosti-
cism

(1) This Gospel has been put together, according to the various authorities, especially of Tertullian, by M. Jahn. It is reprinted in the *Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*, by Thilo, of which one volume only has appeared. Among the remarkable alterations of the Gospels, which most strongly characterise his system, was that of the text so beautifully descriptive of the providence of God,—which “maketh his sun to shine on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain

on the just and the unjust” Matt. v. 45 sun and the rain, those material elements, were the slaves only of the God of matter : the Supreme Deity might not defile himself with the administration of their blessings. Tertull. adv. Marc. iv. 17.

(2) I think that we may collect from Clement of Alexandria, that the community of women, in the Carpocratian system, was that of Plato. Clement insinuates that it was carried into practice

The Ophites (1) are, perhaps, the most perplexing of all these sects. It is difficult to ascertain whether the Serpent from which they took or received their name was a good or an evil spirit,—the Agathodæmon of the Egyptian mythology, or the Serpent of the Jewish and other Oriental schemes. With them, a quaternion seems to have issued from the primal Being, the Abyss, who dwelt alone with his Ennoia, or Thought. These were Christ and Sophia Achamoth, the Spirit and Chaos. The former of each of these powers was perfect, the latter imperfect. Sophia Achamoth, departing from the primal source of purity, formed Ialdabaoth, the Prince of Darkness, the Demiurge, an inferior, but not directly malignant, being—the Satan, or Samaël, or Michael. The tutelary angel of the Jews was Ophis, the Serpent—a reflection of Ialdabaoth. With others, the Serpent was the symbol of Christ himself (2); and hence the profound abhorrence with which this obscure sect was beheld by the more orthodox Christians. In other respects, their opinions appear to have approximated more nearly to the common Gnostic form. At the intercession of Sophia, Christ descended on the man Jesus, to rescue the souls of men from the fury of the Demiurge, who had imprisoned them in matter: they ascended through the realm of the seven planetary angels.

Gnosticism not popular.

Such, in its leading branches, was the Gnosticism of the East, which rivalled the more genuine Christianity, if not in the number of its converts, in the activity with which it was disseminated, especially among the higher and more opulent; and, in its lofty pretensions, claimed a superiority over the humbler Christianity of the vulgar. But for this very reason, Gnosticism, in itself, was diametrically opposite to the true Christian spirit: instead of being popular and universal, it was select and exclusive. It was another, in one respect a higher, form of Judaism, inasmuch as it did not rest its exclusiveness on the title of birth, but on especial knowledge (gnosis), vouchsafed only to the enlightened and inwardly designated few. It was the establishment of the Christians as a kind of religious privileged order, a theophilosophic aristocracy, whose esoteric doctrines soared far above the grasp and comprehension of the vulgar (3). It was a philosophy rather than a religion; at least the philosophic or speculative part would soon have predominated

Strom. iii. c. 2. According to Clement the different sects, or sects of sects, justified their immoralities on different pleas. Some, the Prodigian Gnostics, considered public prostitution a mystic communion; others, that all children of the primary or good Deity might exercise their regal privilege of acting as they pleased; some, the Antitætes, thought it right to break the seventh commandment, because it was uttered by the evil Demiurge. But these were obscure sects, and possibly their adversaries drew these conclusions for them from their doctrines. Strom. i. iii.

(1) Mosheim, p. 399., who wrote a particular dissertation on the Ophites, of which he distinguished two sects, a Jewish and a Christian.

(2) M. Matter conjectures that they had derived the notion of the beneficent serpent, the emblem or symbol of Christ, from the brazen serpent in the wilderness. Perhaps it was the Egyptian Agathodæmon.

(3) Tertullian taunts the Valentinians—"nihil inanis curant quam occultare quid predicant, si tamen predicant qui occultant." Tert. adv. Valent.

over the spiritual. They affected a profound and awful mystery ; they admitted their disciples, in general, by slow and regular gradations. Gnostic Christianity, therefore, might have been a formidable antagonist to the prevailing philosophy of the times, but it would never have extirpated an ancient and deeply-rooted religion ; it might have drained the schools of their hearers, but it never would have changed the temples into solitudes. It would have affected only the surface of society : it did not begin to work upward from its depths, nor penetrated to that strong under-current of popular feeling and opinion which alone operates a profound and lasting change in the moral sentiments of mankind.

With regard to Paganism, the Gnostics are accused of a compromising and conciliatory spirit, totally alien to that of primitive Christianity. They affected the haughty indifference of the philosophers of their own day, or the Brahmins of India, to the vulgar idolatry ; scrupled not a contemptuous conformity with the established worship ; attended the rites and the festivals of the Heathen ; partook of meats offered in sacrifice, and, secure in their own intellectual or spiritual purity, conceived that no stain could cleave to their uninfected spirits from this which, to most Christians, appeared a treasonable surrender of the vital principles of the faith.

Conciliatory
towards
Paganism

This criminal compliance of the Gnostics, no doubt, countenanced and darkened those charges of unbridled licentiousness of manners with which they are almost indiscriminately assailed by the early fathers. Those dark and incredible accusations of midnight meetings, where all the restraints of shame and of nature were thrown off, which Pagan hostility brought against the general body of the Christians, were reiterated by the Christians against these sects, whose principles were those of the sternest and most rigid austerity. They are accused of openly preaching the indifference of human action. The material nature of man was so essentially evil and malignant, that there was no necessity, as there could be no advantage, in attempting to correct its inveterate propensities. While, therefore, it might pursue, uncontrolled, its own innate and inalienable propensities, the serene and uncontaminated spirit of those, at least, who were enlightened by the divine ray, might remain aloof, either unconscious, or, at least, unparticipant, in the aberrations of its grovelling consort. Such general charges, it is equally unjust to believe, and impossible to refute. The dreamy indolence of mysticism is not unlikely to degenerate into voluptuous excess. The excitement of mental has often a strong effect on bodily, emotion. The party of the Gnostics may have contained many whose passions were too strong for their principles, or who may have made their principles the slaves of their passions ; but Christian charity and sober historical criticism concur in rejecting these general accusations. The Gnostics were, in general, imaginative,

rather than practical, fanatics; they indulged a mental, rather than corporeal, license. The Carpocratians have been exposed to the most obloquy. But, even in their case, the charitable doubts of dispassionate historical criticism are justified by those of an ancient writer, who declares his disbelief of any irreligious, lawless, or forbidden practices among these sectaries (1).

It was the reaction, as it were, of Gnosticism, that produced the last important modification of Christianity, during the second century, the Montanism of Phrygia. But we have, at present, proceeded in our relation of the contest between Orientalism and Christianity so far beyond the period to which we conducted the contest with Paganism, that we reascend at once to the commencement of the second century. Montanism, however thus remotely connected with Gnosticism, stands alone and independent as a new aberration from the primitive Christianity, and will demand our attention in its influence upon one of the most distinguished and effective of the early Christian writers.

CHAPTER VI.

CHRISTIANITY DURING THE PROSPEROUS PERIOD OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

Roman
Emperors
at the com-
mence-
ment of
the second
century.

WITH the second century of Christianity commenced the reign of another race of emperors. Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines. were men of larger minds, more capable of embracing the vast empire, and of taking a wide and comprehensive survey of the interests, the manners, and the opinions of the various orders and races of men which reposed under the shadow of the Roman sway. They were not, as the first Cæsars, monarchs of Rome, governing the other parts of the world as dependent provinces; but sovereigns of the Western World, which had gradually coalesced into one majestic and harmonious system. Under the military dominion of Trajan, the empire appeared to reassume the strength and enterprise of the conquering republic: he had invested the whole frontier with a defence more solid and durable than the strongest line of fortresses, or the most impregnable wall—the terror of the Roman arms, and the awe of Roman discipline. If the more prudent Hadrian withdrew the advanced boundaries of the empire, it seemed in the consciousness of strength, disdaining the occupation of wild and savage districts, which rather belonged to the yet unreclaimed realm of barbarism, than were fit to be incorporated in

(1) *Kaì ti mèn prâssontai par' autois ta dthia, kai êkthisma, kai âpseirμένα, iñ d' ouk ân pisteyousaimi.* Irenæus, i. 24.

the dominion of civilisation. Even in the East, the Euphrates appeared to be a boundary traced by nature for the dominion of Rome. Hadrian was the first emperor who directed his attention to the general internal affairs of the whole population of the empire. The spirit of jurisprudence prevailed during the reign of the Antonines; and the main object of the ruling powers seemed to be the uniting under one general system of law the various members of the great political confederacy. Thus, each contributed to the apparent union and durability of the social edifice. This period has been considered by many able writers, a kind of golden age of human happiness (1). What, then, was the effect of Christianity on the general character of the times, and how far were the Christian communities excluded from the general felicity?

It was impossible that the rapid and universal progress of a new religion should escape the notice of minds so occupied with the internal, as well as the external affairs of the whole empire. But it so happened (the Christian will admire in this singular concurrence of circumstances the overruling power of a beneficent Deity), that the moderation and humanity of the emperors stepped in, as it were, to allay at this particular crisis the dangers of a general and inevitable collision with the temporal government. Christianity itself was just in that state of advancement in which, though it had begun to threaten, and even to make most alarming encroachments on the established Polytheism, it had not so completely divided the whole race of mankind, as to force the heads of the Polytheistic party, the official conservators of the existing order of things, to take violent and decisive measures for its suppression. The temples, though, perhaps, becoming less crowded, were in few places deserted; the alarm, though, perhaps, in many towns it was deeply brooding in the minds of the priesthood, and of those connected by zeal or by interest with the maintenance of Paganism, was not so profound or so general, as imperiously to require the interposition of the civil authorities. The milder or more indifferent character of the Emperor had free scope to mitigate or to arrest the arm of persecution. The danger was not so pressing but that it might be averted: that which had arisen thus suddenly and unexpectedly (so little were the wisest probably aware of the real nature of the revolution working in the minds of men) might die away with as much rapidity. Under an emperor, indeed, who should have united the vigour of a Trajan and the political forethought of a Hadrian with the sanguinary relentlessness of a Nero, Christianity would have had to pass a tremendous ordeal. Now, however, the collision of the new religion with the civil power was only occasional, and, as it were, fortuitous; and in these occasional

Characters
of the Em-
perors fa-
vourable
to the ad-
vancement
of Christi-
anity.

(1) This theory is most ably developed by Hegewisch. See the Translation of his Essay, by M. Solvet. Paris, 1834.

Trajan
Emperor
from
A. D. 98 to
116.

Hadrian
Emperor
from 117
to 138.

Antoninus
Pius Em-
peror from
138 to 161.

Christian-
ity in Bi-
thynia and
the adja-
cent pro-
vinces,
A. D. 111,
or 112.

conflicts with the ruling powers, we constantly appear to trace the character of the reigning sovereign. Of these emperors, Trajan possessed the most powerful and vigorous mind—a consummate general, a humane but active ruler : Hadrian was the profoundest statesman, the Antonines the best men. The conduct of Trajan was that of a military sovereign, whose natural disposition was tempered with humanity—prompt, decisive, never unnecessarily prodigal of blood, but careless of human life, if it appeared to stand in the way of any important design, or to hazard that paramount object of the government, the public peace. Hadrian was inclined to a more temporising policy : the more the Roman empire was contemplated as a whole, the more the co-existence of multifarious religions might appear compatible with the general peace. Christianity might, in the end, be no more dangerous than the other foreign religions, which had flowed, and were still flowing in, from the East. The temples of Isis had arisen throughout the empire ; but those of Jupiter or Apollo had not lost their votaries : the Eastern mysteries, the Phrygian, at a later period the Mithriac, had mingled, very little to their prejudice, into the general mass of the prevailing superstitions. The last characteristic of Christianity which would be distinctly understood, was its invasive and uncompromising spirit. The elder Antonine may have pursued from mildness of character the course adopted by Hadrian from policy. The change which took place during the reign of Marcus Aurelius may be attributed to the circumstances of the time ; though the pride of philosophy, as well as the established religion, might begin to take the alarm.

Christianity had probably spread with partial and very unequal success in different quarters : its converts bore in various cities or districts a very different proportion to the rest of the population. No where, perhaps, had it advanced with greater rapidity than in the northern provinces of Asia Minor, where the inhabitants were of very mingled descent, neither purely Greek, nor essentially Asiatic with a considerable proportion of Jewish colonists, chiefly of Babylonian or Syrian, not of Palestinian origin. It was here, in the province of Bithynia, that Polytheism first discovered the deadly enemy, which was undermining her authority. It was here that the first cry of distress was uttered ; and complaints of deserted temples and less frequent sacrifices were brought before the tribunal of the government. The memorable correspondence between Pliny and Trajan is the most valuable record of the early Christian history during this period (1). It represents to us Paganism already claiming the alliance of power to maintain its decaying influence ;

(1) The chronology of Pagi (*Critica in Baronium*) appears to me the most trustworthy. He places the letter of Pliny in the year cxi. or cxii. ; the martyrdom of Ignatius or rather the period

when he was sent to Rome, in cxii., the time when Trajan was in the East, preparing for his Persian war. y

Christianity proceeding in its silent course, imperfectly understood by a wise and polite Pagan, yet still with nothing to offend his moral judgment, except its contumacious repugnance to the common usages of society. This contumacy, nevertheless, according to the recognised principle of passive obedience to the laws of the empire, was deserving of the severest punishment (1). The appeal of Pliny to the supreme authority for advice, as to the course to be pursued with these new, and, in most respects, harmless delinquents, unquestionably implies that no general practice had yet been laid down to guide the provincial governors under such emergencies (2).

Letter of
Pliny.

The answer of Trajan is characterised by a spirit of moderation. It betrays a humane anxiety to allow all such offenders as were not forced under the cognisance of the public tribunals, to elude persecution. Nevertheless it distinctly intimates, that by some existing law, or by the ordinary power of the provincial governor, the Christians were amenable to the severest penalties, to torture, and even to capital punishment. Such punishment had already been inflicted by Pliny; the governor had been forced to interfere, by accusations lodged before his tribunal. An anonymous libel, or impeachment, had denounced numbers of persons, some of whom altogether disclaimed, others declared that they had renounced Christianity. With that unthinking barbarity with which in those times such punishments were inflicted on persons in inferior station, two servants, females—it is possible they were deaconesses—were put to the torture, to ascertain the truth of the vulgar accusations against the Christians. On their evidence, Pliny could detect nothing further than a “culpable and extravagant superstition (3).” The only facts which he could discover were, that they had a custom of meeting together before daylight, and singing a hymn to Christ as God. They were bound together by no unlawful sacrament, but only under mutual obligation not to commit theft, robbery, adultery, or fraud. They met again, and partook together of food, but that of a perfectly innocent kind. The test of guilt to which he submitted the more obstinate delinquents, was adoration before the statues of the Gods and of the Emperor, and the malediction of Christ. Those who refused he ordered to be led out to execution (4). Such was the summary process of the Roman governor; and the approbation of the Emperor clearly shows, that he had not exceeded the recognised limits of his authority. Neither Trajan nor the senate had before this issued any edict on the subject. The

Answer of
Trajan.

(1) The conjecture of Pagi, that the attention of the government was directed to the Christians by their standing aloof from the festivals on the celebration of the Quindecennalia of Trajan, which fell on the year cxi. or cxii., is extremely probable. Pagi quotes two passages of Pliny on the subject of these general rejoicings. *Critica in Bar. i. p. 100.*

(2) Pliny professes his ignorance, because he had never happened to be present at the trial of such causes. This implies that such trials were not unprecedented.

(3) *Prava et inmodica superstitio.*

(4) *Duci jussi cannot bear a milder interpretation.*

rescript to Pliny invested him in no new powers, it merely advised him, as he had done, to use his actual powers with discretion (1), neither to encourage the denunciation of such criminals, nor to proceed without fair and unquestionable evidence. The system of anonymous delation, by which private malice might wreak itself, by false or by unnecessary charges upon its enemies, Trajan reprobates in that generous spirit with which the wiser and more virtuous emperors constantly repressed that most disgraceful iniquity of the times (2). But it is manifest from the executions ordered by Pliny, and sanctioned by the approbation of the emperor, that Christianity was *already* an offence amenable to capital punishment (3), and this, either under some existing statute, under the common law of the empire which invested the provincial governor with the arbitrary power of life and death, or lastly, what in this instance cannot have been the case, the *summum imperium* of the Emperor (4). While then in the individual the profession of Christianity might thus by the summary sentence of the governor, and the tacit approbation of the Emperor, be treated as a capital offence, and the provincial governor might appoint the measure and the extent of the punishment, all public assemblies for the purpose of new and unauthorised worship might likewise be suppressed by the magistrate; for the police of the empire always looked with the utmost jealousy on all associations not recognised by the law; and resistance to such a mandate would call down, or the secret holding of such meetings after their prohibition, would incur any penalty, which the conservator of public order might think proper to inflict upon the delinquent. Such then was the general position of the Christians with the ruling authorities. They were guilty of a crime against the state, by introducing a new and unauthorized religion, or by holding assemblages contrary to the internal regulations of the empire. But the extent to which the law would be enforced against them—how far Christianity would be distinguished from Judaism and other foreign religions, which were permitted the free establishment of their rites—with how much greater jealousy their secret assemblies would be watched than those of other mysteries and esoteric religions—all this would depend upon the milder or more rigid character of the governor, and the willingness or reluctance of their fellow-citizens to arraign them

(1) Actum quem debuisti in exentiendis causis eorum, qui Christiani ad te delati fuerant, secutus es. Traj. ad Plin.

(2) Nam et pessimi exempli, nec nostri sæculi est.

(3) Those who were Roman citizens were sent for trial to Rome. Alii quia cives Romani erant, adnotavi in urbem remittendos.

(4) This rescript or answer of Trajan, approving of the manner in which Pliny carried his law into execution, and suggesting other regulations

for his conduct, is converted by Mosheim into a new law, which from that time became one of the statutes of the empire. Hæc Trajani lex inter publicas Imperii sanctiones relata (p. 234.). Trajan's words expressly declare that no certain rule of proceeding can be laid down, and leave almost the whole question to the discretion of the magistrate. Neque enim in universum aliquid, quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest. Traj. ad Plin.

before the tribunal of the magistrates. This in turn would depend on the circumstances of the place and the time; on the caprice of their enemies; on their own discretion; on their success and the apprehensions and jealousies of their opponents. In general, so long as they made no visible impression upon society, so long as their absence from the religious rites of the city or district, or even from the games and theatrical exhibitions, which were essential parts of the existing Polytheism, caused no sensible diminution in the concourse of the worshippers, their unsocial and self-secluding disposition would be treated with contempt and pity rather than with animosity. The internal decay of the spirit of Polytheism had little effect on its outward splendour. The philosophic party, who despised the popular faith, were secure in their rank, or in their decent conformity to the public ceremonial. The theory of all the systems of philosophy was to avoid unnecessary collision with the popular religious sentiment: their superiority to the vulgar was flattered, rather than offended, by the adherence of the latter to their native superstitions. In the public exhibitions, the followers of all other foreign religions met, as on a common ground. In the theatre or the hippodrome, the worshipper of Isis or of Mithra mingled with the mass of those who still adhered to Bacchus or to Jupiter. Even the Jews, in many parts, at least at a later period, in some instances at the present, betrayed no aversion to the popular games or amusements. Though in Palestine, the elder Herod had met with a sullen and intractable resistance in the religious body of the people, against his attempt to introduce Gentile and idolatrous games into the Holy Land, yet it is probable that the foreign Jews were more accommodating. A Jewish player, named Aliturus, stood high in the favour of Nero; nor does it appear that he had abandoned his religion. He was still connected with his own race; and some of the priesthood did not disdain to owe their acquittal, on certain charges on which they had been sent prisoners to Rome, to his interest with the Emperor, or with the ruling favourite Poppæa. After the Jewish war, multitudes of the prisoners were forced to exhibit themselves as gladiators; and at a later period, the confluence of the Alexandrian Jews to the theatres, where they equalled in numbers the Pagan spectators, endangered the peace of the city. The Christians alone stood aloof from exhibitions which, in their higher and nobler forms, arose out of, and were closely connected with, the Heathen religion; were performed on days sacred to the deities; introduced the deities upon the stage; and, in short, were among the principal means of maintaining in the public mind its reverence for the old mythological fables. The sanguinary diversions of the arena, and the licentious voluptuousness of some of the other exhibitions, were no less offensive to their humanity and their modesty, than those more strictly religious to their piety.

The Jews
not averse
to theatrical
amuse-
ments.

Christians
abstain
from them

its danger
on occa-
sions of
political
rejoicings.

Still, as long as they were comparatively few in number, and did not sensibly diminish the concourse to these scenes of public enjoyment, they would be rather exposed to individual acts of vexatious interference, of ridicule, or contempt, than become the victims of a general hostile feeling : their absence would not be resented as an insult upon the public, nor as an act of punishable disrespect against the local or more widely-worshipped deity to whose honour the games were dedicated. The time at which they would be in the greatest danger from what would be thought their suspicious or disloyal refusal to join in the public rejoicings, would be precisely that which has been conjectured with much ingenuity and probability to have been the occasion of their being thus committed with the popular sentiment and with the government,—the celebration of the birthday, or the accession of the Emperor. With the ceremonial of those days, even if, as may have been the case, the actual adoration of the statue of the Emperor was not an ordinary part of the ritual, much which was strictly idolatrous would be mingled up; and their ordinary excuse to such charges of disaffection, that they prayed with the utmost fervour for the welfare of the Emperor, would not be admitted, either by the sincere attachment of the people and of the government to a virtuous, or their abject and adulatory celebration of a cruel and tyrannical, Emperor.

This crisis in the fate of Christianity; this transition from safe and despicable obscurity to dangerous and obnoxious importance, would of course depend on the comparative rapidity of its progress in different quarters. In the province of Pliny, it had attained that height in little more than seventy years after the death of Christ. Though an humane and enlightened government might still endeavour to close its eyes upon its multiplying numbers and expanding influence, the keener sight of jealous interest, of rivalry in the command of the popular mind, and of mortified pride, already anticipated the time when this formidable antagonist might balance, might at length overweigh, the failing powers of Polytheism. Under a less candid governor than Pliny, and an Emperor less humane and dispassionate than Trajan, the exterminating sword of persecution would have been let loose, and a relentless and systematic edict for the suppression of Christianity hunted down its followers in every quarter of the empire.

Probable
connection
of the per-
secution
under Pliny
with
the state of
the East.

Not only the wisdom and humanity of Trajan, but the military character of his reign, would tend to divert his attention from that which belonged rather to the internal administration of the empire. It is not altogether impossible, though the conjecture is not countenanced by any allusion in the despatch of Pliny, that the measures adopted against the Christians were not entirely unconnected with the political state of the East. The Roman empire, in the Mesopo-

lamian province, was held on a precarious tenure; the Parthian kingdom had acquired new vigour and energy, and during great part of his reign, the state of the East must have occupied the active mind of Trajan. The Jewish population of Babylonia and the adjacent provinces were of no inconsiderable importance in the impending contest. There is strong ground for supposing that the last insurrection of the Jews, under Hadrian, was connected with a rising of their brethren in Mesopotamia, no doubt secretly, if not openly, fomented by the intrigues, and depending on the support, of the king of Parthia. This was at a considerably later period; yet, during the earlier part of the reign of Trajan, the insurrection had already commenced in Egypt and in Cyrene, and in the island of Cyprus, and no sooner were the troops of Trajan engaged on the Eastern frontier towards the close of his reign, than the Jews rose up in all these provinces, and were not subdued till after they had perpetrated and endured the most terrific massacres (1). Throughout the Eastern wars of Trajan, this spirit was most likely known to be fermenting in the minds of the whole Jewish population, not only in the insurgent districts, but in Palestine and other parts of the empire. The whole race, which occupied in such vast numbers the conterminous regions, therefore, would be watched with hostile jealousy by the Roman governors, already prejudiced against their unruly and ungovernable character, and awakened to more than ordinary vigilance by the disturbed aspect of the times. The Christians stood in a singular and ambiguous position between the Jewish and Pagan population; many of them probably descended from, and connected with, the former. Their general peaceful habits and orderly conduct would deserve the protection of a parental government, still their intractable and persevering resistance to the religious institutions of the empire might throw some suspicion on the sincerity of their civil obedience. The unusual assertion of religious might be too closely allied with that of political independence. At all events, the dubious and menacing state of the East required more than ordinary watchfulness, and a more rigid plan of government in the adjacent provinces; and thus the change in society, which was working unnoticed in the more peaceful and less Christianised West, in the East might be forced upon the attention of an active and inquiring ruler; the apprehensions of the inhabitants themselves would be more keenly alive to the formation of a separate and secluded party within their cities; and religious animosity would eagerly seize the opportunity of implicating its enemies in a charge of disaffection to the existing government. Nor is there wanting evidence that the acts of persecution ascribed to Trajan were, in fact, connected with the military movements of the

(1) Euseb. iv. 2. Dio. Cass., or rather, Xiphilin, Orosius, l. 7. Pagi places this Jewish rebellion, A. D. 116.

Emperor. The only authentic Acts are those of Simeon, Bishop of Jerusalem, and of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch (1). In the prefatory observations to the former, it is admitted that it was a local act of violence. The more celebrated trial of Ignatius is stated to have taken place before the Emperor himself at Antioch, when he was preparing for his first Eastern campaign (2). The Emperor is represented as kindling to anger at the disparagement of those gods on whose protection he depended in the impending war. "What, is our religion to be treated as senseless? Are the gods, on whose alliance we rely against our enemies, to be turned to scorn (3)?" If we may trust the epistles ascribed to this bishop, there was an eagerness for martyrdom not quite consistent with the conduct of the Apostles, and betraying a spirit, which, at least, would not allay, by prudential concession, the indignation and resentment of the government (4).

Hadrian
Emperor,
A. D. 117.

The cosmopolite and indefatigable mind of Hadrian was more likely to discern with accuracy, and estimate to its real extent, the growing influence of the new religion. Hadrian was, still more than his predecessor, the Emperor of the West, rather than the monarch of Rome. His active genius withdrew itself altogether from warlike enterprise and foreign conquest; its whole care was centered on the consolidation of the empire within its narrower and uncontested boundaries, and on the internal regulation of the vast confederacy of nations which were gradually becoming more and more assimilated, as subjects or members of the great European empire. The remotest provinces for the first time beheld the presence of the Emperor, not at the head of an army, summoned to defend the insulted barriers of the Roman territory, or pushing forward the advancing line of conquest, but in more peaceful array, providing for the future security of the frontier by impregnable fortresses; adorning the more flourishing cities with public buildings, bridges, and aqueducts; inquiring into the customs, manners, and even the religion, of the more distant parts of the world; encouraging commerce; promoting the arts; in short, improving, by salutary regulations, this long period of peace, to the prosperity and civilisation of the whole empire. Gaul, Britain, Greece, Syria, Egypt, Africa, were in turn honoured by the presence, enriched by the liberality, and benefited by the wise policy of the Emperor (5). His personal

Character
of Ha-
drian.

(1) See them in Ruinart. *Selecta et sincera Martyrum Acta*.

(2) According to the chronology of Pagi, A. D. 112.

(3) ἡμεῖς οὖν σοι δοκοῦμεν κατὰ νοῦν μὴ ἔχειν θεοὺς, οἷς καὶ χράμεθα θυμολαχοῖς πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους. The Jewish legends are full of acts of personal cruelty, ascribed to Trajan, mingled up, as usual, with historical errors and anachronisms. See *Hist. of Jews*, iii. 109.

(4) The epistles represent Ignatius as holding

correspondence with the most eminent bishops of Asia Minor, who do not appear to have been in danger of persecution; that to the Romans deprecates all kindly interference with the government to avert the glorious destiny which he coveted, and intimates some apprehension lest their unwelcome appeal to the imperial clemency might meet with success. I consider this an argument for their authenticity.

(5) M. St. Croix observes (in an essay in the *Mem. de l'Académ.* xlix. 409.) that we have models of twenty-five countries through which

character showed the same incessant activity and politic versatility. On the frontier, at the head of the army, he put on the hardihood and simplicity of a soldier; disdained any distinction, either of fare or of comfort, from the meanest legionary; and marched on foot, through the most inclement seasons. In the peaceful and voluptuous cities of the South, he became the careless and luxurious Epicurean. Hadrian treated the established religion with the utmost respect; he officiated with solemn dignity as supreme pontiff, and at Rome affected disdain or aversion for foreign religions (1). But his mind was essentially imbued with the philosophic spirit (2) : he was tempted by every abstruse research, and every forbidden inquiry had irresistible attraction for his curious and busy temper (3). At Athens, he was in turn the simple and rational philosopher, the restorer of the splendid temple of Jupiter Olympius, and the awestruck worshipper in the Eleusinian mysteries (4). In the East, he aspired to penetrate the recondite secrets of magic, and professed himself an adept in judicial astrology. In the midst of all this tampering with foreign religions, he at once honoured and outraged the prevailing creed, by the deification of Antinous, in whose honour quinquennial games were established at Mantinea; a city built, and a temple, with an endowment for a priesthood (5), founded and called by his name, in Egypt : his statues assumed the symbols of various deities. Acts like these, at this critical period, must have tended to alienate a large portion of the thinking class, already wavering in their cold and doubtful Polytheism, to any purer or more ennobling system of religion.

Hadrian not merely surveyed the surface of society, but his sagacity seemed to penetrate deeper into the relations of the different classes to each other, and into the more secret workings of the social system. His regulations for the mitigation of slavery were recommended, not by humanity alone, but by a wise and prudent policy (6). It was impossible that the rapid growth of Christianity could escape the notice of a mind so inquiring as that of Hadrian, or that he could be altogether blind to its ultimate bearings on the social state of the empire. Yet, the generally humane and pacific

Hadrian travelled. (Compare Eckhel, vi. 486.) He looked into the crater of Etna; saw the sun rise from Mount Casius; ascended to the cataracts of the Nile; heard the statue of Nemnon. He imported exotics from the East. The journeys of Hadrian are traced, in a note to M. Solvet's translation of Hegewisch, cited above. Tertullian calls him curiositatum omnium explorator. Apol. i. v. Eusebius, E. II. v. 5. πάντα τὰ περίεργα πολυπραγμονῶν.

(1) Sacra Romana diligentissimè curavit. peregrina contempsit. Spartian. in Hadrian.

(2) Les autres sentimens de ce prince sont très difficiles à connaître. Il n'embrassa aucune secte, et ne fut ni Académicien, ni Stoïcien, encore moins Epicurien; il parut constamment livre à cette incertitude d'opinions, fruit de la

bizarrierie de son caractère, et d'un savoir superficiel ou mal digéré. St. Croix, ubi supra.

(3) In the *Cæsars* of Julian, Hadrian is described in the pregnant phrase πολυπραγμονῶν τὰ ἀπώριστα, — busied about all the secret religions.

(4) The Apology of Quadratus was presented on Hadrian's visit to Athens, when he was initiated in the mysteries; that of Aristides when he became Epoptes, A. D. 131. Warburton connects the hostility of the celebrators of the mysteries towards Christianity with the Apology of Quadratus, and quotes a passage from Jerome to this effect. Compare Routh's *Reliquiæ Sacrae*, i. 70.

(5) Euseb. iv. 8. Hieronym. in Catal. et Rufin.

(6) Gibbon, vol. i. ch. ii. p. 71.

Hadrian's
conduct
towards
Christi-
anity.

character of his government would be a security against violent measures of persecution; and the liberal study of the varieties of human opinion would induce, if not a wise and rational spirit of toleration, yet a kind of contemptuous indifference towards the most inexplicable aberrations from the prevailing opinions. The apologists for Christianity, Quadratus and Aristides, addressed their works to the Emperor, who does not appear to have repelled their respectful homage (1). The rescript which he addressed, in the early part of his reign, to the proconsul of Asia, afforded the same protection to the Christians against the more formidable danger of popular animosity, which Trajan had granted against anonymous delation. In some of the Asiatic cities, their sullen and unsocial absence from the public assemblies, from the games, and other public exhibitions, either provoked or gave an opportunity for the latent animosity to break out against them. A general acclamation would sometimes demand their punishment. "The Christians to the lions!" was the general outcry; and the names of the most prominent or obnoxious of the community would be denounced with the same sudden and uncontrollable hostility. A weak or superstitious magistrate trembled before the popular voice, or lent himself a willing instrument to the fury of the populace. The proconsul Serenus Granianus consulted the Emperor as to the course to be pursued on such occasions. The answer of Hadrian is addressed to Minucius Fundanus, probably the successor of Granianus, enacting that, in the prosecution of the Christians, the formalities of law should be strictly complied with; that they should be regularly arraigned before the legal tribunal, not condemned on the mere demand of the populace, or in compliance with a lawless outcry (2). The edict does credit to the humanity and wisdom of Hadrian. But, notwithstanding his active and inquisitive mind, and the ability of his general policy, few persons were, perhaps, less qualified to judge of the real nature of the new religion, or to comprehend the tenacious hold which it would obtain upon the mind of man. His character wanted depth and seriousness, to penetrate or to understand the workings of a high, profound, and settled religious enthusiasm (3). The ~~emphatic~~ verses,

Hadrian
incapable
of under-
standing
Christi-
anity.

(1) See the fragments in Routh, *Reliquiæ Sacre*, i. 69—78.

(2) Justin Martyr, *Apol.* i. 68, 69 Euseb. H. E. iv. 9. Mosheim, whose opinions on the state of the Christians are coloured by too Jewish a view of Roman toleration, considers this edict by no means more favourable to the Christians than that of Trajan. It evidently offered them protection under a new and peculiar exigency.

(3) The well-known letter of Hadrian gives a singular view of the state of the religious society, as it existed, or, rather, as it appeared to the inquisitive Emperor. "I am now, my dear Servianus, become fully acquainted with that Egypt which you praise so highly. I have found the people vain, fickle, and shifting with every breath of popular rumour. Those who worship Serapis

are Christians; and those who call themselves Christian bishops are worshippers of Serapis. There is no ruler of a Jewish synagogue, no Samaritan, no Christian bishop, who is not an astrologer, an interpreter of prodigies, and an augurer. The Patriarch himself, when he comes to Egypt, is compelled by one party to worship Serapis, by the other, Christ. "They have but one God: him, Christians, Jews, and Gentiles, worship alike." This latter clause Casaubon understood seriously. It is evidently malicious satire. The common God is Gain. The key to the former curious statement is probably that the tone of the higher, the fashionable, society of Alexandria, was to affect, either on some Gnostic or philosophic theory, that all these religions differed only in form, but were essentially the

which he addressed to his departing spirit (1), contrasts with the solemn earnestness with which the Christians were teaching mankind to consider the mysteries of another life. But, on the whole, the long and peaceful reign of Hadrian allowed free scope to the progress of Christianity; the increasing wealth and prosperity of the empire probably raised in the social scale that class among which it was chiefly disseminated; while the better part of the more opulent would be tempted, at least to make themselves acquainted with a religion, the moral influence of which was so manifestly favourable to the happiness of mankind, and which offered so noble a solution of the great problem of human philosophy, the immortality of the soul.

The gentle temper of the first Antoninus would maintain that milder system which was adopted by Hadrian, from policy or from indifference. The Emperor, whose parental vigilance scrutinised the minutest affairs of the most remote province, could not be ignorant, though his own residence was fixed in Rome and its immediate neighbourhood, of the still expanding progress of Christianity. The religion itself acquired every year a more public character. The Apology now assumed the tone of an arraignment of the folly and unholiness of the established Polytheism; nor was this a low and concealed murmur within the walls of its own places of assemblage, or propagated in the quiet intercourse of the brethren. It no longer affected disguise, nor dissembled its hopes; it approached the foot of the throne; it stood in the attitude, indeed, of a suppliant, claiming the inalienable rights of conscience, but asserting in simple confidence its moral superiority, and in the name of an apology, publicly preaching its own doctrines in the ears of the sovereign and of the world. The philosophers were joining its ranks; it was rapidly growing up into a rival power, both of the religions and philosophies of the world. Yet, during a reign in which human life assumed a value and a sanctity before unknown; in which the hallowed person of a senator was not once violated, even by the stern sword of justice (2); under an emperor who professed and practised the maxim of Scipio, that he had rather save the life of a single man than cause the death of a thousand enemies (3); who considered the subjects of the empire as one family, of which himself was the parent (4), even religious zeal would be rebuked and overawed; and the provincial governments, which too often

Antoninus
Pius Em-
peror,
A. D. 138.

same; that all adored one Deity, all one Logos or Demiurge, under different names; all employed the same arts to impose upon the vulgar, and all were equally despicable to the real philosopher. Dr. Burton, in his History of the Church, suggested, with much ingenuity, that the Samaritans may have been the Gnostic followers of Simon Magus.

(1) Animula, vagula, blandula,
Hospes, comesque corporis.
Quæ nunc abibis in loca

(2) Jul. Capit. Anton. Pius, Aug. Script. p. 138.

(3) Ibid, p. 140.

(4) The reign of Antoninus the First is almost a blank in history. The book of Dion Cassius which contained his reign was lost, except a small part, when Xiphilin wrote. Xiphilin asserts, that Antoninus favoured the Christians.

reflected the fierce passions and violent barbarities of the throne, would now, in turn, image back the calm and placid serenity of the imperial tribunal. Edicts are said to have been issued to some of the Grecian cities—Larissa, Thessalonica, and Athens—and to the Greeks in general, to refrain from any unprecedented severities against the Christians. Another rescript (1), addressed to the cities of Asia Minor, speaks language too distinctly Christian even for the anticipated Christianity of disposition evinced by Antoninus. It calls upon the Pagans to avert the anger of Heaven, which was displayed in earthquakes and other public calamities, by imitating the piety, rather than denouncing the atheism, of the Christians. The pleasing vision must, it is to be feared, be abandoned, which would represent the best of the Pagan Emperors bearing his public testimony in favour of the calumniated Christians; the man who, from whatever cause, deservedly bore the name of the Pious among the adherents of his own religion, the most wisely tolerant to the faith of the Gospel.

CHAPTER VII.

CHRISTIANITY AND MARCUS AURELIUS THE PHILOSOPHER.

THE virtue of Marcus Aurelius, the philosopher, was of a more lofty and vigorous character than that of his gentle predecessor. The second Antonine might seem the last effort of Paganism, or rather of Gentile philosophy, to raise a worthy opponent to the triumphant career of Christianity. A blameless disciple in the severest school of philosophic morality, the austerity of Marcus rivalled that of the Christians in its contempt of the follies and diversions of life; yet his native kindness of disposition was not hardened and embittered by the severity or the pride of his philosophy (2). With Aurelius, nevertheless, Christianity found not only a fair and high-minded competitor for the command of the human mind; not only a rival in the exaltation of the soul of man to noble views and more dignified motives, but a violent and intolerant persecutor. During his reign, the martyrologies become more authentic and credible; the general voice of Christian history arraigns the philosopher, not indeed as the author of a general and systematic plan for the extirpation of Christianity, but as withdrawing even

(1) The rescript of Antonine, in Eusebius, to which Xiphilin alludes (Euseb. iv. 13), in favour of the Christians, is now generally given up as spurious. The older writers disputed to which of the Antonines it belonged. Lardner argues, from the Apologies of Justin Martyr, that the Christians were persecuted "even to death," during this reign. The inference is inconclusive:

they were obnoxious to the law, and might endeavour to gain the law on their side, though it may not have been carried into execution. The general voice of Christian antiquity is favourable to the first Antoninus,

(2) Verecundus sine ignavia, sine tristitia gravis. Jcl. Capit. Aug. Hist. p. 160.

the ambiguous protection of the former Emperors, and giving free scope to the excited passions, the wounded pride, and the jealous interests of its enemies; neither discountenancing the stern determination of the haughty governor to break the contumacious spirit of resistance to his authority, nor the outburst of popular fury, which sought to appease the offended gods by the sacrifice of these despisers of their Deities.

Three important causes concurred in bringing about this dangerous crisis in the destiny of Christianity at this particular period:—1. The change in the relative position of Christianity with the religion of the empire; 2. the circumstances of the times; 3. the character of the Emperor. 1. Sixty years of almost uninterrupted peace, since the beginning of the second century, had opened a wide field for the free development of Christianity. It had spread into every quarter of the Roman dominions. The western provinces, Gaul and Africa, rivalled the East in the number, if not in the opulence, of their Christian congregations: in almost every city had gradually arisen a separate community, seceding from the ordinary habits and usages of life, at least from the public religious ceremonial; governed by its own laws; acting upon a common principle; and bound together in a kind of latent federal union throughout the empire. A close and intimate correspondence connected this new moral republic; an impulse, an opinion, a feeling, which originated in Egypt or Syria, was propagated with electric rapidity to the remotest frontier of the West. Irenæus, the Bishop of Lyons, in Gaul, whose purer Greek had been in danger of corruption from his intercourse with the barbarous Celtic tribes, enters into a controversy with the speculative teachers of Antioch, Edessa, or Alexandria, while Tertullian in his rude African Latin denounces or advocates opinions which sprung up in Pontus or in Phrygia. A new kind of literature had arisen, propagated with the utmost zeal of proselytism, among a numerous class of readers, who began to close their ears against the profane fables, and unsatisfactory philosophical systems, of Paganism. While the Emperor himself condescended, in Greek of no despicable purity and elegance, for the age, to explain the lofty tenets of the Porch, and to commend its noble morality to his subjects, the minds of a large portion of the world were preoccupied by writers who, in language often impregnated with foreign and Syrian barbarisms, enforced still higher morals, resting upon religious tenets altogether new and incomprehensible, excepting to the initiate. Their sacred books were of still higher authority; commanded the homage, and required the diligent and respectful study, of all the disciples of the new faith. Nor was this empire within the empire, this universally disseminated sect,—which had its own religious rites, its own laws, to which it appealed rather than to the statutes of the empire; its

Three causes of the hostility of M. Aurelius and his government to Christianity.
1. Altered position of Christianity in regard to Paganism.

own judges (for the Christians, wherever they were able, submitted their disputes to their bishop and his associate presbyters) its own financial regulations, whether for the maintenance of public worship, or for charitable purposes; its own religious superiors, who exercised a very different control from that of the pontiffs or sacerdotal colleges of Paganism; its own usages and conduct; in some respects its own language;—confined to one class, or to one description of Roman subjects. Christians were to be found in the court, in the camp, in the commercial market; they discharged all the duties, and did not decline any of the offices, of society. They did not altogether shun the forum, or abandon all interest in the civil administration; they had their mercantile transactions, in common with the rest of that class. One of their apologists indignantly repels the charge of their being useless to society: “We are no Indian Brahmins, or devotees, living naked in the woods, self-banished from civilised life (1).” Among their most remarkable distinctions, no doubt, was their admission of slaves to an equality in religious privileges. Yet there was no attempt to disorganise or correct the existing relations of society. Though the treatment of slaves in Christian families could not but be softened and humanised, as well by the evangelic temper, as by this acknowledged equality in the hopes of another life, yet Christianity left the emancipation of mankind from these deeply-rooted distinctions between the free and servile races, to times which might be ripe for so great and important a change.

This secession of one part of society from its accustomed religious intercourse with the rest, independent of the numbers whose feelings and interests were implicated in the support of the national religion in all its pomp and authority, would necessarily produce estrangement, jealousy, animosity.

Con-
nec-
tion of
Christi-
anity with
the fall of
the Roman
empire.

As Christianity became more powerful, a vague apprehension began to spread abroad among the Roman people that the fall of their old religion might, to a certain degree, involve that of their civil dominion; and this apprehension, it cannot be denied, was justified, deepened, and confirmed, by the tone of some of the Christian writings, no doubt, by the language of some of the Christian teachers. Idolatry was not merely an individual, but a national, sin, which would be visited by temporal as well as spiritual retribution. The anxiety of one at least, and that certainly not the most discreet of the Christian apologists, to disclaim all hostility towards the temporal dignity of the empire, implies that the Christians were ob-

(1) *Infructuosi in negotiis dicimur. Quo pacto homines vobiscum degentes, ejusdem victus, habitus, instinctus, ejusdem ad vitam necessitatis? Neque enim Brachmanni, aut Indorum gymnosophistæ sumus, sylvicole et exules vitæ. Meminimus gratiam nos debere Deo domino creatori, nullum fructum operum ejus repudiamur, plantæ temperamus, ne ultra modum aut perperam uta-*

mur. Itaque non sine foro, non sine macello, non sine balneis, tabernis, officinis, stabulis, nundinis vestris, cæterisque commerciis, cohabitamus in hoc seculo: navigamus et nos vobiscum et militamus, et rusticamur, et mercamur; proinde miscemus artes, opera nostra publicamus usui vestro. Tertull. Apologet. c. 42.

noxious to this charge. The Christians are calumniated, writes Tertullian to Scapula (1), at a somewhat later period (under Severus), as guilty of treasonable disloyalty to the Emperor. As the occasion required, he exculpates them from any leaning to Niger, Albinus, or Cassius, the competitors of Severus, and then proceeds to make this solemn protestation of loyalty. "The Christian is the enemy of no man, assuredly not of the Emperor. The sovereign he knows to be ordained by God : of necessity, therefore, he loves, reveres, and honours him, and prays for his safety, with that of the whole Roman empire, that it may endure—and endure it will—as long as the world itself (2)." But other Christian documents, or at least documents eagerly disseminated by the Christians, speak a very different language (3). By many modern interpreters, the Apocalypse itself is supposed to refer not to the fall of a predicted spiritual Rome, but of the dominant Pagan Rome, the visible Babylon of idolatry, and pride, and cruelty. According to this view, it is a grand dramatic vaticination of the triumph of Christianity over Heathenism, in its secular as well as its spiritual power. Be this as it may, in later writings, the threatening and maledictory tone of the Apocalypse is manifestly borrowed, and directed against the total abolition of Paganism, in its civil as well as religious supremacy. Many of these forged prophetic writings belong to the reign of the Antonines, and could not emanate from any quarter but that of the more injudicious and fanatical Christians. The second (Apocryphal) book of Esdras is of this character, the work of a Judaizing Christian (4); it refers distinctly to the reign of the twelve Cæsars (5), and obscurely intimates, in many parts, the approaching dissolution of the existing order of things. The doctrine of the Millennium, which was as yet far from exploded, or fallen into disregard, mingled with all these prophetic anticipations of future change in the destinies of mankind (6). The visible throne of Christ according to these writings, was to be erected on the ruins of all earthly empires : the nature of his kingdom would, of course, be unintelligible to the Heathen; and all that he would comprehend would be a vague notion that the empire of the world was to be transferred from Rome, and that this extinction of the majesty of the empire was, in some incomprehensible manner, connected with the triumph of the new faith. His terror, his indignation, and his contempt,

Tone of
some
Christian
writings
confirm-
atory of this
apprehen-
sion.

(1) Sed et circa majestatem imperii infamatur, tamen nunquam Albiniani, nec Nigriciani, vel Cassiani, inveniri poterunt Christiani.

Christianus nullius est hostis, nedum imperatoris; quem sciens a Deo suo constitui, necesse est ut et ipsum diligat, et revereatur, et honoret, et salvum velit, cum toto Romano imperio quousque sæculum stabit: tamdiu enim stabit. Ad Scapulam, 1.

(2) Quousque sæculum stabit.

(3) I have been much indebted, in this passage, to the excellent work of Tischner, "der Fall des Heidenthums," a work written with so

much learning, candour, and Christian temper, as to excite great regret that it was left incomplete at its author's death.

(4) The general character of the work, the nationality of the perpetual allusions to the history and fortunes of the race of Israel, betray the Jew; the passages ch. ii. 42. 48.; v. 5.; vii. 26. 29., are avowed Christianity.

(5) C. xii. 14. Compare Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, l. vii. c. 2.

(6) There are apparent allusions to the Millennium in the Sibylline verse, particularly at the close of the eighth book.

would lead to fierce and implacable animosity. Even in Tertullian's *Apology*, the ambiguous word "sæculum" might mean no more than a brief and limited period, which was yet to elapse before the final consummation.

The Sibylline books.

But the Sibylline verses, which clearly belong to this period, express, in the most remarkable manner, this spirit of exulting menace at the expected simultaneous fall of Roman idolatry and of Roman empire. The origin of the whole of the Sibylline oracles now extant is not distinctly apparent, either from the style, the manner of composition, or the subject of their predictions (1). It is manifest that they were largely interpolated by the Christians, to a late period, and some of the books can be assigned to no other time but the present (2). Much, no doubt, was of an older date. It is scarcely credible that the fathers of this time would quote coterifporary forgeries as ancient prophecies. The Jews of Alexandria, who had acquired some taste for Grecian poetry, and displayed some talent for the translation of their sacred books into the Homeric language and metre (3), had, no doubt, set the example of versifying their own prophecies, and perhaps of ascribing them to the Sibyls, whose names were universally venerated, as revealing to mankind the secrets of futurity. They may have begun with comparing their own prophets with these ancient seers, and spoken of the predictions of Isaiah or Ezekiel as their Sibylline verses, which may have been another word for prophetic or oracular.

Almost every region of Heathenism boasts its Sibyl. Poetic predictions, ascribed to these inspired women, were either published or religiously preserved in the sacred archives of the cities. No where were they held in such awful reverence as in Rome. The opening of the Sibylline books was an event of rare occurrence, and only at seasons of fearful disaster or peril. Nothing would be more tempting to the sterner or more ardent Christian, than to enlist, as it were, on his side, these authorised Pagan interpreters of futurity; to extort, as it were, from their own oracles, this confession of their approaching dissolution. Nothing, on the other hand, would more strongly excite the mingled feelings of apprehension and animosity in the minds of the Pagans, than this profanation, as it would seem, whether they disbelieved or credited

(1) The first book, to page 176., may be Jewish; it then becomes Christian, as well as the second. But in these books there is little prophecy; it is in general the Mosaic history, in Greek hexameters. If there are any fragments of Heathen verses, they are in the third book.

(2) *Ad horum imperatorum (Antonini Pii cum liberis suis M. Aurelio et Lucio Vero) tempora videntur Sibyllarum vaticinia tantum extendi; id quod etiam e lib. v. videre licet.* Note of the editor, *Opsopæus*, p. 688.

(3) Compare Valckenæer's learned treatise *de Aristobulo Judæo*. The fragments of Ezekiel Tragedus, and many passages, which are evident

versions of the Jewish scriptures, in the works of the fathers, particularly of Eusebius, may be traced to this school. It is by no means impossible that the *Pollio* of Virgil may owe many of its beauties to those Alexandrian versifiers of the Hebrew prophets. Virgil, who wrought up indiscriminately into his refined gold all the ruder ore which he found in the older poets, may have seen and admired some of these verses. He may have condescended, as he thought, to borrow the images of these religious books of the barbarians, as a modern might the images of the Vedas or of the Koran.

them, of the sacred treasures of prophecy. It was Paganism made to utter; in its most hallowed language, and by its own inspired prophets, its own condemnation; to announce its own immediate downfall, and the triumph of its yet obscure enemy over both its religious and temporal dominion.

The fifth and eighth books of the Sibylline oracles, are those which most distinctly betray the sentiments and language of the Christians of this period (1). In the spirit of the Jewish prophets, they denounce the folly of worshipping gods of wood and stone, of ivory, of gold, and silver; of offering incense and sacrifice to dumb and deaf deities. The gods of Egypt and of Greece,—Hercules, Jove, and Mercury,—are cut off. The whole sentiment is in the contemptuous and aggressive tone of the later, rather than the more temporate and defensive argument of the earlier, apologists for Christianity. But the Sibyls are made, not merely to denounce the fall of Heathenism, but the ruin of Heathen states and the desolation of Heathen cities. Many passages relate to Egypt, and seem to point out Alexandria, with Asia Minor, the cities of which, particularly Laodicea, are frequently noticed, as the chief staple of these poetico-prophetic forgeries (2). The following passage might almost seem to have been written after the destruction of the Serapeum by Theodosius (3). “Isis, thrice hapless goddess, thou shalt remain alone on the shores of the Nile, a solitary Mænad by the sands of Acheron. No longer shall thy memory endure upon the earth. And thou, Serapis, that retest upon thy stones, much must thou suffer; thou shalt be the mightiest ruin in thrice hapless Egypt; and those, who worshipped thee for a god, shall know thee to be nothing. And one of the linen-clothed priests shall say, Come, let us build the beautiful temple of the true

(1) Lib. v. p. 557.

(2) *Θμοῦις καὶ Ζοῦις θλίβεται, καὶ κόπτεται.*
Βουλὴ Ἡρακλείους τε Δίος τε καὶ Ἑρμοῖο.—P. 558.

The first of these lines is mutilated.

(3) *Ἴσι, θεὰ τριτάλαινα, μενεῖς δ' ἐπὶ χεύμασι Νείλου,*
Μοῦνη, μαϊνάς ἄπακτος, ἐπὶ φαρμάβοις Ἀχέροντος,
Κοῦκίτι σου μενιά γε μενιά κατὰ γαίαν ἀπασαν.
Καὶ σὺ Σέραπι, λίθοις ἐπικείμενε, πολλὰ μογήσεις,
Κίση πτώμα μίγιστον, ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ τριταλαίνῃ.

Γινώσθινται σε τὸ μηδὲν, ὅσοι Θεὸν ἐξέμνησαν.
Καὶ τις ἐρεῖ τῶν ἱερῶν λιγυρόσσιος ἀνθρ.
Δεῦτε Θεοῦ τίμενος καλοῦ στήθωμεν ἀληθῆς,
Δεῦτε τὸν ἐκ προγογῶν δεινὸν νόμον ἀλλάξωμεν,
Τοῦ χάριν ἢ λιθίνοις καὶ ὀστρακίνοις θεοῖσι
Πομπάς καὶ τελετὰς ποιοῦμενοι οὐκ ἐνόησαν,
Στρίψωμεν ψυχάς, Θεὸν ἀρεθίτον ἐξυμνοῦντες.
Αὐτὸν τὸν γενετῆρα, τὸν αἰδίου γεγαῶτα,
Τὸν πρυτανὶν πάντων, τὸν ἀληθία, τὸν βασιλῆα.
Ψυχὸς τρέφον γενετῆρα, Θεὸν μίγαν, αἶν ἐόντα.

Lib. v. p. 638. edit. Gall. Amstelod. 1689.

God; let us change the awful law of our ancestors, who, in their ignorance, made their pomps and festivals to gods of stone and clay; let us turn our hearts, hymning the Everlasting God, the Eternal Father, the Lord of all, the True, the King, the Creator and Preserver of our souls, the Great, the Eternal God."

A bolder prophet, without doubt writing precisely at this perilous crisis, dares, in the name of Sibyl, to connect together the approaching fall of Rome and the gods of Rome. "O, haughty Rome, the just chastisement of Heaven shall come down upon thee from on high; thou shalt stoop thy neck, and be levelled with the earth; and fire shall consume thee, razed to thy very foundations; and thy wealth shall perish; wolves and foxes shall dwell among thy ruins, and thou shalt be desolate as if thou hadst never been. Where then will be thy Palladium? Which of thy gods of gold, or of stone, or of brass, shall save thee? Where then the decrees of thy senate? Where the race of Rhea, of Saturn, or of Jove; all the lifeless deities thou hast worshipped, or the shades of the deified dead? When the thrice five gorgeous Cæsars (the twelve Cæsars usually so called, with Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian), who have enslaved the world from east to west, shall be, one will arise silver-helmeted, with a name like the neighbouring sea (Hadrian and the Adriatic Sea) (1)." The poet describes the busy and lavish character of Hadrian, his curiosity in prying into all religious mysteries, and his deification of Antinous (2).

"After him shall reign three, *whose times shall be the last* (3). * * * Then from the uttermost parts of the earth, whither

- (1) Ἦξει σοι ποτ' ἄνωθεν ἴση, ὑψαύχηνε Ρώμη,
Οὐράνιος πληγὴ, καὶ κάμψεις αὐχένα πρῶτη,
Καὶ ξειραρισθῆσθαι, καὶ πυρρὴ σε ὅλην δαπανήσῃ
Κεκλιμένην ἐδάφουσιν οἷς, καὶ πλοῦτος ὀλεῖται,
Καὶ σὲ θίμεθλα λύκοι, καὶ ἀλώπεκες οἰκήσουσι.
Καὶ τότε ἴσῃ πανέημος ὅλος, ὡς μὴ γιγνομένη.
Ποῦ τότε Παλλάδιον; ποῖός σε θεὸς διασώσει,
Χρυσοῦς, ἢ λίθινος, ἢ χαλκεός; ἢ τότε ποῦ σοι
Δόγματα συγκλήτου; ποῦ, Ρείης, ἢ Κρήνιοι,
Ἡ δὲ Διὸς γενεή, καὶ πάντων ἂν εἰς ἐσάσθης
Δαίμονας ἀψύχους, νεκρῶν εἰδῶλα καμόντων;

Ἀλλ' ὅτε σοι βασιλεῖς χλιδανοὶ τρεῖς πίντε γίνονται,
Κόσμον δουλώσαντες ἀπ' ἀντολῆς μέχρι δυσμῶν,
Ἔσσει' ἀναξ πολιοῦκρανος, ἔχων πέλας οὐνομα πόντου.

Lib. viii. p. 679.

The ruin of Rome, and the restoration of Europe to the East, are likewise alluded to in the following passages. Lib. iii. p. 404—408; v. 573—576; viii. 694. 712. 718.

There is another allusion to Hadrian, lib. v. p. 552., much more laudatory. Ἔσται καὶ πανάριστος ἀνὴρ.

- (2) Κόσμον ἐποπτιῶναι μισρὰ ποδὶ, δῶρα πορίζων
Καὶ μαγικῶν ἀδύτων μυστήρια πάντα μιθίζει,
Παιδὰ θεὸν δεικνύσει, ἅπαντα σε ἐσάσματα λύσει.—P. 088.
(3) Τὸν μετὰ τρεῖς ἄρξουσιν, πανύστατον ἡμᾶρ ἔχοντας—

One of these three is to be an old man, to heap up vast treasures, in order to surrender them to the eastern destroyer, Ne.

he fled, shall the matricide (Nero) return (1). And now, O king of Rome shalt thou mourn, disrobed of the purple laticlave of thy rulers, and clad in sackloth. The glory of thy eagle-bearing legions shall perish. Where shall be thy might? what land, which thou hast enslaved by thy vain laurels, shall be thine ally? For there shall be confusion on all mortals over the whole earth, when the Almighty Ruler comes, and seated upon his throne, judges the souls of the quick and of the dead, and of the whole world. There shall be wailing and scattering abroad, and ruin, when the fall of the cities shall come, and the abyss of earth shall open."

In another passage, the desolation of Italy, the return of Nero, the general massacre of kings, are pourtrayed in fearful terms. The licentiousness of Rome is detailed in the blackest colours. "Sit silent in thy sorrow, O guilty and luxurious city; the vestal virgins shall no longer watch the sacred fire; thy house is desolate (2)." Christianity is then represented under the image of a pure and heaven-descending temple, embracing the whole human race.

Whether these prophecies merely embodied, for the private edification, the sentiments of the Christians, they are manifest indications of these sentiments; and they would scarcely be concealed with so much prudence and discretion, as not to transpire among adversaries, who now began to watch them with jealous vigilance: if they were boldly published, for the purpose of con-

ἰν' οὕτω γ' ἀπανέλθῃ
Ἐκ περάτων γαίης ὁ ρυγῆς μητρόκτονος ἔλθων.
Καὶ τότε πενθήσεις, πλατύ πόρφυρον ἡγεμονήσαν
Φῶς ἐκδυσάμινῃ, καὶ πένθιμον εἶμα φεροῦσα.

Καὶ γὰρ ἀστοφόρων λεγεῶνων δόξα πεισῖται.
Ποῦ τότε σοι τὸ κράτος; ποῖα γῇ σύμμαχος ἴσται.
Δουλωθεῖσα τισὶς ματαιοφροσύνησιν ἀβίσσους,
Πάσης γὰρ γαίης θνητῶν τότε σύγχυσις ἴσται,
Αὐτὸς παντοκράτωρ ὅταν ἔλθῃ βῆμασι κρίνῃ
Ζώων καὶ νεκρῶν ψυχὰς, καὶ κόσμον ἅπαντα.

Ἐκ τότε τοὶ βρυγμοὶ, καὶ σκορπισμοὶ, καὶ ἄλωσις,
Πτῶσις ὅταν ἔλθῃ πόλει, καὶ χάσματα γαίης.

Lib. viii. 688.

(1) The strange notion of the flight of Nero beyond the Euphrates, from whence he was to return as Antichrist, is almost the burthen of the Sibylline verses. Compare lib. iv. p. 520—525; v. 573., where there is an allusion to his theatrical tastes, 619—714. The best commentary is that of St. Augustin on the Thessalonians, "Et tunc revelabitur ille iniquus. Ego prorsus quid dixerit me fateor ignorare. Suspiciones tamen hominum, quas vel audire vel legere de hac re potui, non tacebo. Quidam putant hoc de imperio dictum fuisse Romano; et propterea Paulum Apostolum non id aperit scribere voluisse, ne calumniam videlicet incurreret quod Romano imperio male optaverit, cum speraretur eternum: ut hoc quod dixit, 'Jam enim mysterium iniquitatis operatur,' Neronem voluerit intelligi, cujus jam facta velut Antichristi videbantur; unde

nonnulli ipsum resurrecturum et futurum Antichristum suspiciantur. Alii vero nec eum occisum putant, sed subtractum potius, at putaretur occisus; et vivum occultari in vigore ipsius ætatis, in qua fuit cum cederetur extinctus, donec suo tempore reveletur, et restituantur in regnum." According to the Sibyls, Nero was to make an alliance with the kings of the Medes and Persians; return at the head of a mighty army; accomplish his favourite scheme of digging through the isthmus of Corinth, and then conquer Rome. For the manner in which Neander traces the germ of this notion in the Apocalypse, see Pflanzung, der Chr. Kirche, ii. 327. Nero is Antichrist in the political verses of Commodinus. xli.

(2) Lib. v. p. 621.

verting the Heathen, they would be still more obnoxious to the general indignation and hatred. However the more moderate and rational, probably the greater number, of the Christians might deprecate these dangerous and injudicious effusions of zeal, the consequences would involve all alike in the indiscriminating animosity which they would provoke; and, whether or not these predictions were contained in the Sibylline poems, quoted by all the early writers, by Justin Martyr, by Clement, and by Origen, the attempt to array the authority of the Sibyls against that religion and that empire, of which they were before considered almost the tutelary guardians, would goad the rankling aversion to violent resentment.

The general superiority assumed in any way by Christianity, directly it came into collision with the opposite party, would of itself be fatal to the peace which it had acquired in its earlier obscurity. Of all pretensions, man is most jealous of the claim to moral superiority. II. The darkening aspect of the times wrought up this growing alienation and hatred to open and furious hostility. In the reign of M. Aurelius, we approach the verge of that narrow oasis of peace which intervenes between the final conquests of Rome and the recoil of repressed and threatening barbarism upon the civilisation of the world. The public mind began to be agitated with gloomy rumours from the frontier, while calamities, though local, yet spread over wide districts, shook the whole Roman people with apprehension. Foreign and civil wars, inundations, earthquakes, pestilences, which we shall presently assign to their proper dates, awoke the affrighted empire from its slumber of tranquillity and peace (1).

Change in
the cir-
cumstan-
ces of the
times.

The emperor Marcus reposed not, like his predecessor, in his Lanuvian villa, amid the peaceful pursuits of agriculture, or with the great jurisconsults of the time, meditating on a general system of legislation. The days of the second Numa were gone by, and the philosopher must leave his speculative school and his Stoic friends to place himself at the head of the legions. New levies invade the repose of peaceful families; even the public amusements are encroached upon, the gladiators are enrolled to serve in the army (2).

Terror of
the Roman
world.

It was at this unexpected crisis of calamity and terror, that superstition, which had slept in careless and Epicurean forgetfulness of its gods, suddenly awoke, and when it fled for succour to the altar of the tutelar deity, found the temple deserted and the shrine neglected. One portion of society stood aloof in sullen disregard or avowed contempt of rites so imperiously demanded by the avenging gods. If, in the time of public distress, true religion inspires serene re-

(1) Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp.* ii. 593.

(2) Fuit enim populo hic sermo, cum sustulisset ad bellum gladiatores quod populum sublati

voluptatibus vellet cogere ad philosophiam. Jul. Cap. p. 204. c

signation to the Divine will, and receives the awful admonition to more strenuous and rigid virtue; superstition shudders at the manifest anger of the gods, yet looks not within to correct the offensive guilt, but abroad, to discover some gift or sacrifice which may appease the Divine wrath, and bribe back the alienated favour of Heaven. Rarely does it discover any offering sufficiently costly, except human life. The Christians were the public and avowed enemies of the gods; they were the self-designated victims, whose ungrateful atheism had provoked, whose blood might avert, their manifest indignation. The public religious ceremonies, the sacrifices, the games, the theatres, afforded constant opportunities of inflaming and giving vent to the paroxysms of popular fury, with which it disburdened itself of its awful apprehensions. The cry of "The Christians to the lions!" was now no longer the wanton clamour of individual or party malice; it was not murmured by the interested, and eagerly re-echoed by the blood-thirsty, who rejoiced in the exhibition of unusual victims; it was the deep and general voice of fanatic terror, solemnly demanding the propitiation of the wrathful gods, by the sacrifice of these impious apostates from their worship (1). The Christians were the authors of all the calamities which were brooding over the world, and in vain their earnest apologists appealed to the prosperity of the empire, since the appearance of Christ, in the reign of Augustus, and showed that the great enemies of Christianity, the emperors Nero and Domitian, were likewise the scourges of mankind (2).

III. Was then the philosopher superior to the vulgar superstition? In what manner did his personal character affect the condition of the Christians? Did he authorise, by any new edict, a general and systematic persecution, or did he only give free scope to the vengeance of the awe-struck people, and countenance the timid or fanatic concessions of the provincial governors to the riotous demand of the populace for Christian blood? Did he actually repeal or suspend, or only neglect to enforce, the milder edicts of his predecessors, which secured to the Christians a fair and public trial before the legal tribunal (3)? The acts ascribed to Marcus Aurelius, in the meager and unsatisfactory annals of his reign, are at issue with the sentiments expressed in his grave and lofty Meditations. He assumes, in his philosophical lucubrations,

3. The character of the Emperor.

(1) The miracle of the thundering legion (see *postea*), after having suffered deadly wounds from former assailants, was finally transfigured by the critical spear of Moyle. (*Works*, vol. ii.) Is it improbable that it was invented or wrought up, from a casual occurrence, into its present form, as a kind of counterpoise to the reiterated charge which was advanced against the Christians, of having caused, by their impiety, all the calamities inflicted by the barbarians on the empire?

(2) Melito apud Routh, *Reliq. Sacr.* 1. 111. Compare Tertullian, *Apologet.* v.

(3) There is an edict of the Emperor Aurelian in the genuine acts of St. Symphorian, in which Pagi, Ruinart, and Neander (1. 106.), would read the name of M. Aurelius instead of Aurelianus. Their arguments are, in my opinion, inclusive, and the fact that Aurelian is named among the persecuting Emperors in the treatise ascribed to Lactantius (*de Mort. Persecutor.*), in which his edicts (*scripta*) against the Christians are distinctly named, outweighs their conjectural objections.

Private
sentiments
of the Em-
peror, in
his Medi-
tations.

which he dictated during his campaigns upon the Danube, the tone of profound religious sentiment, but proudly disclaims the influence of superstition upon his mind. Yet in Rome, he either shared or condescended to appear to share, all the terrors of the people. The pestilence, said to have been introduced from the East by the soldiers, on their return from the Parthian campaign, had not yet ceased its ravages, when the public mind was thrown into a state of the utmost depression by the news of the Marcomanic war. M. Aurelius, as we shall hereafter see, did not, in his proper person, countenance, to the utmost, the demands of the popular superstition. For all the vulgar arts of magic, divination, and vaticination, the Emperor declares his sovereign contempt; yet on that occasion besides the public religious ceremonies, to which we shall presently allude, he is said himself to have tampered with the dealers in the secrets of futurity; to have lent a willing ear to the prognostications of the Chaldeans, and to the calculations of astrology. If these facts be true, and all this was not done in mere compliance with the general sentiment, the serene composure of Marcus himself may at times have darkened into terror; his philosophic apathy may not always have been exempt from the influence of shuddering devotion. In issuing an edict against the Christians, Marcus may have supposed that he was consulting the public good, by conciliating the alienated favour of the gods. But the superiority of the Christians to all the terrors of death appears at once to have astonished and wounded the Stoic pride of the Emperor. Philosophy, which was constantly dwelling on the solemn question of the immortality of the soul, could not comprehend the eager resolution with which the Christian departed from life; and in the bitterness of jealousy sought out unworthy motives for the intrepidity which it could not emulate. "How great is that soul which is ready, if it must depart from the body, to be extinguished, to be dispersed, or still to subsist! and this readiness must proceed from the individual judgment, not from mere obstinacy, like the Christians, but deliberately, solemnly, and without tragic display (1)." The Emperor did not choose to discern that it was in the one case the doubt, in the other the assurance, of the eternal destiny of the soul, which constituted the difference. Marcus, no doubt, could admire, not merely the dignity with which the philosopher might depart on his uncertain but necessary disembarkation from the voyage of life, and the bold and fearless valour with

(1) The Emperor's Greek is by no means clear in this remarkable passage. *Ψαλὴν παρατάξιν* is usually translated as in the text "mere obstinacy." A recent writer renders it "ostentation or parade." I suspect an antithesis with *ἰδρυμένη* *κρίσις*, and that it refers to the manner in which the Christians *arranged* themselves as a body

against the authority of the persecutors; and should render the words omitted in the text *ὥστε καὶ ἄλλον πείσαι*, and without that tragic display which is intended to persuade others to follow our example. The Stoic pride would stand alone in the dignity of an intrepid death.

which his own legionaries or their barbarous antagonists could confront death on the field of battle ; but, at the height of his wisdom, he could not comprehend the exalted enthusiasm with which the Christian trusted in the immortality and blessedness of the departed soul in the presence of God.

There can be little doubt that Marcus Antonius issued an edict by which the Christians were again exposed to all the denunciations of common informers, whose zeal was now whetted by some share, if not by the whole, of the confiscated property of delinquents. The most distinguished Christians of the East were sacrificed to the base passions of the meanest of mankind, by the Emperor, who, with every moral qualification to appreciate the new religion, closed his ears, either in the stern apathy of Stoic philosophy, or the more engrossing terrors of Heathen bigotry.

It is remarkable how closely the more probable records of Christian martyrology harmonise with the course of events, during the whole reign of M. Aurelius, and illustrate and justify our view of the causes and motives of their persecution (1).

It was on the 7th March, 161, that the elder Antoninus, in the charitable words of a Christian apologist, sunk in death into the sweetest sleep (2), and M. Aurelius assumed the reins of empire. He immediately associated with himself the other adopted son of Antonine, who took the name of L. Verus. One treacherous year of peace gave the hope of undisturbed repose, under the beneficent sway which carried the maxims of a severe and humane philosophy into the administration of public affairs. Mild to all lighter delinquencies, but always ready to mitigate the severity of the law ; the Emperor was only inexorable to those more heinous offences which endanger the happiness of society. While the Emperor himself superintended the course of justice, the senate resumed its ancient honours. The second year of his reign, the horizon began to darken. During the reign of the first Antonine, earthquakes, which shook down some of the Asiatic cities, and fires, which ravaged those of the West, had excited considerable alarm ; but these calamities assumed a more dire and destructive character during the reign of Aurelius. Rome itself was first visited with a terrible inundation (3). The Tiber swept away all the cattle in the neighbourhood, threw down a great number of buildings ; among the rest, the magazines and granaries of corn, which were chiefly situated on the banks of the river. This appalling event was followed

A. D. 161.

A. D. 162.

(1) A modern writer, M. Ripault (Hist. Philosophique de Marc Aurele), ascribes to this time the memorable passage of Tertullian's apology — " Existiment omnis publicæ cladis, omnis popularis incommodi, Christianos esse causam. Si Tiberis ascendit in moenia, si Nilus non ascendit in arva, si cælum stetit, si terra movit, si famas, si lues, statim Christianos ad leonem." Tout ce qui suit les cultes de l'empire, s'élève de toutes

parts contre les Chrétiens. On attribue à ce qu'on appelle leur impiété, le déchaînement des fléaux, sous lesquels gémissent tous les hommes sans privilège ni exemption, sans distinction de religion. II. 86. Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. II. 609.

(2) Quadratus apud Xiphilin. Antonin. 3.

(3) Capitol. M. Antonin. p. 168.

A. D. 166.
Calamities
of the em-
pire.

by a famine, which pressed heavily on the poorer population of the capital. At the same time, disturbances took place in Britain; the Catti, a German tribe, ravaged Belgium; and the Parthian war, which commenced under most disastrous circumstances, the invasion of Syria, and the loss of three legions, demanded the presence of his colleague in the empire. Though the event was announced to be prosperous, yet intelligence of doubtful and hard-won victories seemed to intimate that the spell of Roman conquest was beginning to lose its power (1). After four years, Verus returned, bearing the trophies of victory; but, at the same time, the seeds of a calamity, which outweighed all the barren honours which he had won on the shores of the Euphrates. His army was infected with a pestilence, which superstition ascribed to the plunder of a temple in Seleucia or Babylonia. The rapacious soldiers had opened a mystic coffer, inscribed with magical signs, from which issued a pestilential air, which laid waste the whole world. This fable is a vivid indication of the state of the public mind (2). More rational observation traced the fatal malady from Ethiopia, and Egypt to the Eastern army, which it followed from province to province, mouldering away its strength as it proceeded, even to the remote frontiers of Gaul and the northern shores of the Rhine. Italy felt its most dreadful ravages, and in Rome itself the dead bodies were transported out of the city not on the decent bier, but heaped up in waggons. Famine aggravated the miseries, and, perhaps, increased the virulence, of the plague (3). Still the hopes of peace began to revive the drooping mind; and flattering medals were struck, which promised the return of golden days. On a sudden, the empire was appalled with the intelligence of new wars in all quarters. The Moors laid waste the fertile provinces of Spain; a rebellion of shepherd's withheld the harvests of Egypt from the capital. Their defeat only added to the dangerous glory of Avidius Cassius, who, before long, stood forth as a competitor for the empire. A vast confederacy of nations, from the frontiers of Gaul to the borders of Illyricum, comprehending some of the best-known and most formidable of the German tribes, with others, whose dissonant races were new to the Roman ears, had arisen with a simultaneous movement (4). The armies were wasted with the Parthian campaigns, and the still more destructive plague. The Marcomannic has been

(1) Sed in diebus Parthici belli, persecutiones Christianorum, quartâ jam post Neronem vice, in Asiâ et Galliâ graves præcepto ejus extiterunt, multique sanctorum martyrio coronati sunt. This loose language of Orsius (for the persecution in Gaul, if not in Asia, was much later than the Parthian war,) appears to connect the calamities of Rome with the persecutions.

(2) This was called the annus calamitosus. There is a strange story in Capitolinus of an impostor who harangued the populace, from the

wild fig-tree in the Campus Martius, and asserted that if, in throwing himself from the tree, he should be turned into a stork, fire would fall from heaven, and the end of the world was at hand, —ignem de cælo lapsurum finemque mundi affore diceret. As he fell, he loosed a stork from his bosom. Aurelius on his confession of the imposture, released him. Cap. Anton. 13.

(3) Julius Cap. Ant. Phil. 21.

(4) See the List in Capitol. p. 200.

compared with the second Punic war, though, at the time, even in the paroxysm of terror, the pride of Rome would probably not have ennobled an irruption of barbarians, however formidable, by such a comparison. The presence of both the Emperors was immediately demanded. Marcus, indeed, lingered in Rome, probably to enrol the army; (for which purpose he swept together recruits from all quarters, and even robbed the arena of its bravest gladiators,) certainly to perform the most solemn and costly religious ceremonies. Every rite was celebrated which could propitiate the Divine favour, or allay the popular fears. Priests were summoned from all quarters; foreign rites performed (1); lustrations and funeral banquets for seven days purified the infected city. It was, no doubt, on this occasion that the unusual number of victims provoked the sarcastic wit, which insinuated that if the Emperor returned victorious, there would be a dearth of oxen (2). Precisely at this time, the Christian martyrologies date the commencement of the persecution under Aurelius. In Rome itself, Justin, the apologist of Christianity, either the same or the following year, ratified with his blood the sincerity of his belief in the doctrines for which he had abandoned the Gentile philosophy. His death is attributed to the jealousy of Crescens, a Cynic, whose audience had been drawn off by the more attractive tenets of the Christian Platonist. Justin was summoned before Rusticus, one of the philosophic teachers of Aurelius, the prefect of the city, and commanded to perform sacrifice. On his refusal, and open avowal of his Christianity, he was scourged, and put to death. It is by no means improbable that, during this crisis of religious terror, mandates should have been issued to the provinces to imitate the devotion of the capital, and every where to appease the offended gods by sacrifice. Such an edict, though not designating them by name, would, in its effects, and perhaps in intention, expose the Christians to the malice of their enemies. Even if the provincial governors were left of their own accord to imitate the example of the Emperor, their own zeal or loyalty would induce them to fall in with the popular current; and the lofty humanity which would be superior at once to superstition, to interest, and to the desire of popularity, which would neglect the opportunity of courting the favour of the Emperor and the populace, would be a rare and singular virtue upon the tribunal of a provincial ruler.

The persecution raged with the greatest violence in Asia Minor. It was here that the new edicts were promulgated, so far departing

Christian
martyr-
doms.
A. D. 166

Persecu-
tion in
Asia Mi-
nor.

(1) *Peregrinos ritus impleverit*. Such seems the uncontested reading in the Augustan history; yet the singular fact that at such a period the Emperor should introduce foreign rites, as well as the unusual expression, may raise a suspicion that some word, with an opposite meaning, is the genuine expression of the author.

(2) This early pasquinade was couched in the form of an address from the white oxen to the Emperor. If you conquer, we are undone. *Οἱ βοῦς οἱ λευκοὶ Μαρκεῖ τῷ Καίσαρι, ἀνδρὶ συνηήσας, ἡμῆς ἀπωλόμεθα*. *Ann. Marc. xxv. 4.*

from the humane regulations of the former Emperors, that the prudent apologists venture to doubt their emanating from the imperial authority (1). By these rescripts, the delators were again let loose, and were stimulated by the gratification of their rapacity as well as of their revenge, out of the forfeited goods of the Christian victims of persecution.

Polycarp. The fame of the aged Polycarp, whose death the sorrowing church of Smyrna related in an epistle to the Christian community at Philomelium or Philadelphia, which is still extant, and bears every mark of authenticity (2), has obscured that of the other victims of Heathen malice or superstition. Of these victims, the names of two only have survived; one who manfully endured, the other who timidly apostatised in the hour of trial. Germanicus appeared; was forced to descend into the arena; he fought gallantly, until the merciful Proconsul entreated him to consider his time of life. He then provoked the tardy beast, and in an instant obtained his immortality. The impression on the wondering people was that of indignation rather than pity. The cry was redoubled, "Away with the godless! let Polycarp be apprehended!" The second, Quintus, a Phrygian, had boastfully excited the rest to throw themselves in the way of the persecution. He descended, in his haste, into the arena; the first sight of the wild-beasts so overcame his hollow courage, that he consented to sacrifice.

Polycarp was the most distinguished Christian of the East; he had heard the Apostle St. John; he had long presided, with the most saintly dignity, over the see of Smyrna. Polycarp neither ostentatiously exposed himself, nor declined such measures for security as might be consistent with his character. He consented to retire into a neighbouring village, from which, on the intelligence of the approach of the officers, he retreated to another. His place of concealment being betrayed by two slaves, whose confession had been extorted by torture, he exclaimed, "The will of God be done;" ordered food to be prepared for the officers of justice; and requested time for prayer, in which he spent two hours. He was placed upon an ass, and on a day of great public concourse, conducted towards the town. He was met by Herod the Irenarch, and his father Nicetas, who took him, with considerate respect, into their own carriage, and vainly endeavoured to persuade him to submit to the two tests by which the Christians were tried, the salutation of the Emperor by the title of Lord, and sacrifice. On his determinate refusal, their compassion gave place to contumely; he was hastily thrust out of the chariot, and conducted to the crowded stadium. On the entrance of the old man upon the public scene, the excited devotion of the Christian spectators imagined that they

(1) Melito apud Euseb. E. H. iv. 20.

(2) In Cotelierii Patres Apostolici, ii. 195.

heard a voice from heaven, "Polycarp, be firm!" The Heathen, in their vindictive fury, shouted aloud, that Polycarp had been apprehended. The merciful Proconsul entreated him, in respect to his old age, to disguise his name. He proclaimed aloud that he was Polycarp; the trial proceeded. "Swear," they said, "by the Genius of Cæsar; retract, and say, away with the godless." The old man gazed in sorrow at the frantic and raging benches of the spectators, rising above each other, and with his eyes uplifted to heaven, said, "Away with the godless!" The Proconsul urged him further—"Swear, and I release thee; blaspheme Christ." "Eighty and six years have I served Christ, and he has never done me an injury; how can I blaspheme my King, and my Saviour?" The Proconsul again commanded him to swear by the Genius of Cæsar. Polycarp replied, by avowing himself a Christian, and by requesting a day to be appointed on which he might explain before the Proconsul the blameless tenets of Christianity. "Persuade the people to consent," replied the compassionate, but overawed ruler. "We owe respect to authority; to thee I will explain the reasons of my conduct, to the populace I will make no explanation." The old man knew too well the ferocious passions raging in their minds, which it had been vain to attempt to allay by the rational arguments of Christianity. The Proconsul threatened to expose him to the wild beasts. "'Tis well for me to be speedily released from this life of misery." He threatened to burn him alive. "I fear not the fire that burns for a moment; thou knowest not that which burns for ever and ever." His countenance was full of peace and joy, even when the herald advanced into the midst of the assemblage, and thrice proclaimed—"Polycarp has professed himself a Christian." The Jews and Heathens (for the former were in great numbers, and especially infuriated against the Christians) replied with an overwhelming shout, "This is the teacher of all Asia, the overthrower of our gods, who has perverted so many from sacrifice and the adoration of the gods." They demanded of the Asiarch, the president of the games, instantly to let loose a lion upon Polycarp. He excused himself by alleging that the games were over. A general cry arose that Polycarp should be burned alive. The Jews were again as vindictively active as the Heathens in collecting the fuel of the baths, and other combustibles, to raise up a hasty yet capacious funeral pile. He was speedily unrobed; he requested not to be nailed to the stake; he was only bound to it.

The calm and unostentatious prayer of Polycarp may be considered as embodying the sentiments of the Christians of that period. "O Lord God Almighty, the Father of thy well-beloved and ever blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee; the God of angels, powers, and of every creature,

and of the whole race of the righteous who live before thee, I thank thee that thou hast graciously thought me worthy of this day and this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of thy martyrs, and drink of Christ's cup, for the resurrection to eternal life, both of body and soul, in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit; among whom may I be admitted this day, as a rich and acceptable sacrifice, as thou, O true and faithful God, hast prepared, and foreshown and accomplished. Wherefore I praise thee for all thy mercies; I bless thee; I glorify thee, with the eternal and heavenly Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, to whom, with thee and the Holy Spirit, be glory now and for ever."

The fire was kindled in vain. It arose curving like an arch around the serene victim, or, like a sail swelling with the wind, left the body unharmed. To the sight of the Christians, he resembled a treasure of gold or silver (an allusion to the gold tried in the furnace); and delicious odours, as of myrrh or frankincense, breathed from his body. An executioner was sent in to despatch the victim; his side was pierced, and blood enough flowed from the aged body to extinguish the flames immediately around him (1).

The whole of this narrative has the simple energy of truth: the prudent yet resolute conduct of the aged bishop; the calm and dignified expostulation of the governor; the wild fury of the populace; the Jews eagerly seizing the opportunity of renewing their unslaked hatred to the Christian name, are described with the simplicity of nature. The supernatural part of the transaction is no more than may be ascribed to the high-wrought imagination of the Christian spectators, deepening every casual incident into a wonder. The voice from heaven, heard only by Christian ears; the flame from the hastily piled wood, arching over the unharmed body; the grateful odours, not impossibly from aromatic woods, which were used to warm the baths of the more luxurious, and which were collected for the sudden execution; the effusion of blood (2), which might excite wonder from the decrepit frame of a man at least a hundred years old. Even the vision of Polycarp himself (3), by which he was forewarned of his approaching fate, was not unlikely to arise before his mind at that perilous crisis. Polycarp closed the nameless train of Asiatic martyrs (4).

Some few years after, the city of Smyrna was visited with a terrible earthquake; a generous sympathy was displayed by the inhabitants of the neighbouring cities; provisions were poured in from

(1) The Greek account adds a dove, which soared from his body, as it were his innocent departing soul. For *παρίστωσα* however has been very ingeniously substituted *ἐν ἀρίστωσα*. See Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, i. 316.

(2) According to the great master of nature, Lady Macbeth's diseased memory is haunted with a similar circumstance, at the murder of

Duncan. "Who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him." Macbeth, act v. s. 1.

(3) The difficulty of accurately reconciling the vision with its fulfilment has greatly perplexed the writers who insist on its preternatural origin. Jortin, p. 307.

(4) *Κατίπαισι τὸν διαγμὸν*.

all quarters; homes were offered to the houseless; carriages furnished to convey the infirm and the children from the scene of ruin. They received them as if they had been their parents or children. The rich and the poor vied in the offices of charity; and, in the words of the Grecian sophist, thought that they were receiving rather than conferring a favour (1). A Christian historian may be excused if he discerns in this humane conduct the manifest progress of Christian benevolence; and that benevolence, if not unfairly ascribed to the influence of Christianity, is heightened by the recollection that the sufferers were those whose amphitheatre had so recently been stained with the blood of the aged martyr. If, instead of beholding the retributive hand of divine vengeance in the smouldering ruins of the city, they hastened to alleviate the common miseries of Christian and of Pagan, with equal zeal and liberality, it is impossible not to trace at once the extraordinary revolution in the sentiments of mankind, and the purity of the Christianity which was thus so superior to those passions which have so often been fatal to its perfection.

At this period of enthusiastic excitement—of superstition on the one hand, returning in unreasoning terror to its forsaken gods, and working itself up by every means to a consolatory feeling of the divine protection; of religion, on the other, relying in humble confidence on the protection of an all-ruling Providence; when the religious parties were, it might seem, aggrandising their rival deities, and tracing their conflicting powers throughout the whole course of human affairs; to every mind each extraordinary event would be deeply coloured with supernatural influence; and whenever any circumstance really bore a providential or miraculous appearance, it would be ascribed by each party to the favouring interposition of its own god.

Such was the celebrated event which was long current in Christian history as the legend of the thundering legion (2). Heathen historians, medals still extant, and the column which bears the name of Antoninus at Rome, concur with Christian tradition in commemorating the extraordinary deliverance of the Roman army, during the war with the German nations, from a situation of the utmost peril and difficulty. If the Christians at any time served in the imperial armies (3)—if military service was a question, as seems extremely probable, which divided the early Christians (4), some considering it too closely connected with the idolatrous practices of an oath to the fortunes of Cæsar, and the worship of the

Miracle of
the thun-
dering
legion.

(1) Tillemont, *Hist. des Emp.* ii. p. 687. The philosopher Aristides wrote an oration on this event.

(2) See Moyle's Works, vol. ii. Compare Routh, *Reliq. Sacre*, i. 153, with authors quoted.

(3) Tertullian, in a passage already quoted, states distinctly *militamus vobiscum*.

(4) Neander has developed this notion with his usual ability, in this part of his *History of the Church*.

standards, which were to the rest of the army, as it were, the household gods of battle; while others were less rigid in their practice, and forgot their piety in their allegiance to their sovereign, and their patriotism to their country; at no time were the Christians more likely to overcome their scruples than at this critical period. The armies were recruited by unprecedented means; and many Christians, who would before have hesitated to enroll themselves, might less reluctantly submit to the conscription, or even think themselves justified in engaging in what appeared necessary and defensive warfare. There might then have been many Christians in the armies of M. Aurelius,—but that they formed a whole separate legion, is manifestly the fiction of a later age. In the campaign of the year 174, the army advanced incautiously into a country entirely without water; and, in this faint and enfeebled state, was exposed to a formidable attack of the whole barbarian force. Suddenly, at their hour of most extreme distress, a copious and refreshing rain came down, which supplied their wants; and while their half recruited strength was still ill able to oppose the onset of the enemy, a tremendous storm, with lightning and hailstones of an enormous size, drove full upon the adversary, and rendered his army an easy conquest to the reviving Romans (1). Of this awful, yet seasonable interposition, the whole army acknowledged the preternatural, the divine, origin. By those of darker superstition, it was attributed to the incantations of the magician Arnuphis, who controlled the elements to the service of the Emperor. The medals struck on the occasion, and the votive column erected by Marcus himself, render homage to the established deities, to Mercury and to Jupiter (2). The more rational Pagans, with a flattery which received the suffrage of admiring posterity, gave the honour to the virtues of Marcus, which demanded this signal favour from approving Heaven (3). The Christian, of course, looked alone to that one Almighty God whose providence ruled the whole course of nature, and saw the secret operation of his own prayers meeting with the favourable acceptance of the Most High (4) “While the Pagans ascribed the honour of this deliverance to their own Jove,” writes Tertullian, “they unknowingly bore testimony to the Christian’s God.”

The latter end of the reign of Marcus Aurelius (5) was signalled

(1) In the year after this victory (A. D. 175.), the formidable rebellion of Avidius Cassius disturbed the East, and added to the perils and embarrassments of the empire.

(2) Mercury, according to Pagi, appears on one of the coins relating to this event. Compare Reudwig’s note in Routh, l. c.

(3) Lampridius (in vit.) attributes the victory to the Chaldeans. Marcus, de Seipso (l. i. c. 6.), allows that he had the magician Arnuphis in his army.

Chaldæa mago ceu carminis ritu
Arinavere Deos, seu, quod reor, omne Tonantus
Obsequium Marci mores potuere mereri.
Claud. vi. Cons. Hon.

(4) In Jovis nomine Deo nostro testimonium reddidit. Tertullian ad Scapulam, p. 20. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. v. 5.

(5) If we had determined to force the events of this period into an accordance with our own view of the persecutions of M. Aurelius, we might have adapted the chronology of Dodwell, who

by another scene of martyrdom, in a part of the empire far distant from that where persecution had before raged with the greatest violence, though not altogether disconnected from it by the original descent of the sufferers (1).

The Christians of Lyons and Vienne appear to have been a religious colony from Asia Minor or Phrygia, and to have maintained a close correspondence with those distant communities. There is something remarkable in the connection between these regions and the East. To this district the two Herods, Archelaus and Herod Antipas, were successively banished; and it is singular enough, that Pontius Pilate, after his recall from Syria, was exiled to the same neighbourhood.

Martyrs of
Vienne.
A. D. 177.

There now appears a Christian community, corresponding in Greek with the mother church (2). It is by no means improbable that a kind of Jewish settlement of the attendants on the banished sovereigns of Judæa might have been formed in the neighbourhood of Vienne and Lyons, and maintained a friendly, no doubt a mercantile, connection with their opulent brethren of Asia Minor, perhaps through the port of Marseilles. Though Christianity does not appear to have penetrated into Gaul till rather a late period (3), it may have travelled by the same course, and have been propagated in the Jewish settlement by converts from Phrygia or Asia Minor. Its Jewish origin is, perhaps, confirmed by its adherence to the Judæo-Christian tenet of abstinence from blood (4).

The commencement of this dreadful, though local persecution, was an ebullition of popular fury. It was about the period when the German war, which had slumbered during some years of precarious peace, again threatened to disturb the repose of the empire. Southern Gaul, though secure beyond the Rhine, was yet at no great distance from the incursions of the German tribes; and it is possible that personal apprehensions might mingle with the general fanatic terror, which exasperated the Heathens against their Christian fellow-citizens. The Christians were on a sudden exposed to a general attack of the populace. Clamours soon grew to personal violence; they were struck, dragged about the streets, plundered, stoned, shut up in their houses, until the more merciful hostility of the ruling authorities gave orders for their arrest and imprisonment until the arrival of the governor. One man of birth and rank, Vettius Epagathus, boldly undertook their defence against

assigns the martyrs of Lyons to the year 167; but the evidence seems in favour of the later date, 177. See Mosheim. Lardner, who, if not by his critical sagacity, commands authority by his scrupulous honesty, says, "Nor do I expect that any learned man, who has a concern for his reputation as a writer, should attempt a direct confutation of this opinion." Works, 4to edit. i. 380.

(1) Euseb. Eccl. Hist. v. 1.

(2) *Epistola Viennensium et Lugdunensium*, in Routh, i. 265.

(3) *Serius Alpes transgressa*, is the expression of a Christian writer, Sulpicius Severus.

(4) "How can those eat infants to whom it is not lawful to eat the blood of brutes?" Compare, however, Tertullian's apology, ch. 9., and Origen contra Celsum, viii.; from whence it appears that this abstinence was more general among the early Christians.

the vague charges of atheism and impiety : he was charged with being himself a Christian, and fearlessly admitted the honourable accusation. The greater part of the christian community adhered resolutely to their belief ; the few whose courage failed in the hour of trial, and who purchased their security by shameful submission, nevertheless did not abandon their more courageous and suffering brethren ; but, at considerable personal danger, continued to alleviate their sufferings by kindly offices. Some Heathen slaves were at length compelled, by the dread of torture, to confirm the odious charges which were so generally advanced against the Christians : —banquets on human flesh ; promiscuous and incestuous concubinage ; Thyestean feasts, and OEdipodean weddings. The extorted confessions of these miserable men exasperated even the more moderate of the Heathens, while the ferocious populace had now free scope for their sanguinary cruelty. The more distinguished victims were Sanctus, a deacon of Vienne ; a new convert named Maturus, and Attalus, of Phrygian descent, from the city of Pergamus. They were first tortured by means too horrible to describe—if, without such description, the barbarity of the persecutors, and the heroic endurance of the Christian martyrs, could be justly represented. Many perished in the suffocating air of the noisome dungeons, many had their feet strained to dislocation in the stocks ; the more detested victims, after every other means of torture were exhausted, had hot plates of iron placed upon the most sensitive parts of their bodies.

Among these victims was the aged Bishop of Lyons, Pothinus, now in his ninetyeth year, who died in prison after two days, from the ill usage which he had received from the populace. His feeble body had failed, but his mind remained intrepid ; when the frantic rabble environed him with their insults, and demanded with contumelious cries, “ Who is the God of the Christians ? ” he calmly replied, “ Wert thou worthy, thou shouldst know.”

But the amphitheatre was the great public scene of popular barbarity and of Christian endurance. They were exposed to wild-beasts, which, however, do not seem to have been permitted to despatch their miserable victims, and made to sit in a heated iron chair, till their flesh reeked upwards with an offensive odour.

A rescript of the Emperor, instead of allaying the popular frenzy, gave ample license to its uncontrolled violence. Those who denied the faith were to be released ; those who persisted in it, condemned to death.

Martyrdom of
Blandina.

But the most remarkable incident in this fearful and afflicting scene, and the most characteristic of the social change which Christianity had begun to work, was this, that the chief honours of this memorable martyrdom were assigned to a female and a slave. Even the Christians themselves scarcely appear aware of the deep and

universal influence of their own sublime doctrines. The mistress of Blandina, herself a martyr, trembled lest the weak body and, still more, the debased condition of the lowly associate in her trial, might betray her to criminal concession. Blandina shared in all the most excruciating sufferings of the most distinguished victims; she equalled them in the calm and unpretending superiority to every pain which malice, irritated and licensed, as it were, to exceed, if it were possible, its own barbarities on the person of a slave, could invent. She was selected by the peculiar vengeance of the persecutors, whose astonishment probably increased their malignity, for new and unprecedented tortures, which she bore with the same equable magnanimity.

Blandina was first led forth with Sanctus, Maturus, and Attalus; and, no doubt, the ignominy of their public exposure was intended to be heightened by their association with a slave. The wearied executioners wondered that her life could endure during the horrid succession of torments which they inflicted. Blandina's only reply was, "I am a Christian, and no wickedness is practised among us."

In the amphitheatre, she was suspended to a stake, while the combatants, Maturus and Sanctus, derived vigour and activity from the tranquil prayers which she uttered in her agony; and the less savage wild-beasts kept aloof from their prey. A third time she was brought forth, as a public exhibition of suffering, with a youth of fifteen, named Ponticus. During every kind of torment, her language and her example animated the courage and confirmed the endurance of the boy, who at length expired under the torture. Blandina rejoiced at the approach of death, as if she had been invited to a wedding banquet, and not thrown to the wild-beasts. She was at length released. After she had been scourged, placed in the iron chair, enclosed in a net, and, now in a state of insensibility, tossed by a bull, some more merciful barbarian transpierced her with a sword. The remains of all these martyrs, after remaining long unburied, were cast into the Rhone, in order to mock and render still more improbable their hopes of a resurrection.

CHAPTER VIII.

FOURTH PERIOD. CHRISTIANITY UNDER THE SUCCESSORS OF M. AURELIUS.

Fourth
period.

Rapid suc-
cession of
Emperors.
A. D. 180.
to 284.

SUCH was the state of Christianity at the commencement of the fourth period, between its first promulgation and its establishment under Constantine. The golden days of the Roman empire had already begun to darken, and closed for ever with the reign of Marcus the philosopher. The empire of the world became the prize of bold adventure, or the precarious gift of a lawless soldiery. During little more than a century, from the accession of Commodus to that of Dioclesian, more than twenty Emperors (not to mention the pageants of a day, and the competitors for the throne, who retained a temporary authority over some single province) flitted like shadows along the tragic scene of the imperial palace. A long line of military adventurers, often strangers to the name, to the race, to the language of Rome, — Africans and Syrians, Arabs and Thracians, — seized the quickly shifting sceptre of the world. The change of sovereign was almost always a change of dynasty, or, by some strange fatality, every attempt to re-establish an hereditary succession was thwarted by the vices or imbecility of the second generation. M. Aurelius is succeeded by the brutal Commodus; the vigorous and able Severus by the fratricide Caracalla. One of the imperial historians has made the melancholy observation, that of the great men of Rome scarcely one left a son the heir of his virtues; they had either died without offspring, or had left such heirs, that it had been better for mankind if they had died leaving no posterity (1).^a

Insecurity
of the
throne fa-
vourable
to Christi-
anity.

In the weakness and insecurity of the throne lay the strength and safety of Christianity. During such a period, no systematic policy was pursued in any of the leading internal interests of the empire. It was a government of temporary expedients, of individual passions. The first and commanding object of each succeeding head of a dynasty was to secure his contested throne, and to centre upon himself the wavering or divided allegiance of the provinces. Many of the Emperors were deeply and inextricably involved in foreign wars, and had no time to devote to the social changes within the pale of the empire. The tumults or the terrors of German, or Gothic, or Persian inroad, effected a perpetual diversion from the slow and silent internal aggressions of Christianity. The frontiers constantly and imperiously demanded the presence of the Emperor,

(1) *Neminem prope magnorum virorum optimum et utilem filium reliquisse satis claret. Denique aut sine liberis viri interierunt, aut tales*

habuerunt plerique, ut melius fuerit de rebus humanis sine posteritate decedere. Spartiani Severus, Aug. Hist. p. 360.

and left him no leisure to attend to the feeble remonstrances of the neglected priesthood : the dangers of the civil absorbed those of the religious constitution. Thus Christianity had another century of regular and progressive advancement to arm itself for the inevitable collision with the temporal authority, till, in the reign of Dioclesian, it had grown far beyond the power of the most unlimited and arbitrary despotism to arrest its invincible progress ; and Constantine, whatever the motives of his conversion, no doubt adopted a wise and judicious policy, in securing the alliance, rather than continuing the strife, with an adversary which divided the wealth, the intellect, if not the property and the population, of the empire.

The persecutions which took place during this interval were the hasty consequences of the personal hostility of the Emperors, not the mature and deliberate policy of a regular and permanent government. In general, the vices and the detestable characters of the persecutors would tend to vindicate the innocence of Christianity ; and to enlist the sympathies of mankind in its favour, rather than to deepen the general animosity. Christianity, which had received the respectful homage of Alexander Severus, could not lose in public estimation by being exposed to the gladiatorial fury of Maximin. Some of the Emperors were almost as much strangers to the gods as to the people and to the senate of Rome. They seemed to take a reckless delight in violating the ancient majesty of the Roman religion. Foreign superstitions, almost equally new, and scarcely less offensive to the general sentiment, received the public, the pre-eminent, homage of the Emperor. Commodus, though the Grecian Hercules was at once his model, his type, and his deity, was an ardent votary of the Isiac mysteries ; and at the Syrian worship of the Sun, in all its foreign and oriental pomp, Elagabalus commanded the attendance of the trembling senate.

Causes of
persecu-
tions
during
this pe-
riod.

If Marcus Aurelius was, as it were, the last effort of expiring Polytheism, or rather of ancient philosophy, to produce a perfect man, according to the highest ideal conception of human reason, the brutal Commodus might appear to retrograde to the savage periods of society. Commodus was a gladiator on the throne ; and if the mind, humanised either by the milder spirit of the times, or by the incipient influence of Christianity, had begun to turn in distaste from the horrible spectacles which flooded the arena with human carnage, the disgust would be immeasurably deepened by the appearance of the Emperor as the chief actor in these sanguinary scenes. Even Nero's theatrical exhibitions had something of the elegance of a polished age ; the actor in one of the noble tragedies of ancient Greece, or even the accomplished musician, might derogate from the dignity of an Emperor, yet might, in some degree, excuse the unseemliness of his pursuits by their intellectual character. But the amusements and public occupations of Com-

Commo-
dus, A. D.
180 to 193.

modus had long been consigned by the general contempt and abhorrence to the meanest of mankind, to barbarians and slaves; and were as debasing to the civilised man as unbecoming in the head of the empire (1). The courage which Commodus displayed in confronting the hundred lions which were let loose in the arena, and fell by his shafts (though in fact the imperial person was carefully guarded against real dangers), and the skill with which he clave with an arrow the slender neck of the giraffe, might have commanded the admiration of a flattering court. But when he appeared, as a gladiator, gloried in the acts, and condescended to receive the disgraceful pay of a profession so infamous as to degrade for ever the man of rank or character who had been forced upon the stage by the tyranny of former Emperors, the courtiers, who had been bred in the severe and dignified school of the philosopher, must have recoiled with shame, and approved, if not envied, the more rigid principles of the Christians, which kept them aloof from such degrading spectacles. Commodus was an avowed proselyte of the Egyptian religion, but his favourite god was the Grecian Hercules. He usurped the attributes and placed his own head on the statues of this deity, which was the impersonation, as it were, of brute force and corporeal strength. But a deity which might command adoration in a period of primæval barbarism, when man lives in a state of perilous warfare with the beasts of the forest, in a more intellectual age sinks to his proper level. He might be the appropriate god of a gladiator, but not of a Roman Emperor (2).

Every thing which tended to desecrate the popular religion to the feelings of the more enlightened and intellectual must have strengthened the cause of Christianity: the more the weaker parts of Paganism, and those most alien to the prevailing sentiment of the times, were obtruded on the public view, the more they must have contributed to the advancement of that faith which was rapidly attaining to the full growth of a rival to the established religion. The subsequent deification of Commodus, under the reign of Severus, in wanton resentment against the senate (3), prevented his odious memory from sinking into oblivion. His insults upon the more rational part of the existing religion could no longer be forgotten, as merely emanating from his personal character. Commodus advanced into a god, after his death, brought disrepute upon the whole Polytheism of the empire. Christianity was perpetually, as it were, at hand, and ready to profit by every favourable juncture.

(1) *Ælii Lampridii, Commodus, in August. Hist.*

(2) In the new fragments of Dion Cassius recovered by M. Mai there is an epigram pointed against the assumption of the attributes of Hercules by Commodus. The Emperor had placed his own head on the colossal statue of Hercules, with the inscription—*Lucius Commodus Hercules.*

Διὸς παῖς Καλλίνορος Ἡρακλῆς,
Οὐκ εἰμι Λεύκιος, ἀλλ' ἀναγκάζουσι με.

The point is not very clear, but it seems to be a protest of the God against being confounded with the Emperor. Mai, *Fragm. Vatic. ii.* 225.

(3) *Spawiaxi Severus, Hist. Aug. p. 345.*

By a singular accident, the ruffian Commodus was personally less inimically disposed to the Christians than his wise and amiable father. His favourite concubine, Martia, in some manner connected with the Christians, mitigated the barbarity of his temper, and restored to the persecuted Christians a long and unbroken peace, which had been perpetually interrupted by the hostility of the populace, and the edicts of the government in the former reign. Christianity had no doubt been rigidly repelled from the precincts of the court during the life of Marcus, by the predominance of the philosophic faction. From this period, a Christian party occasionally appears in Rome : many families of distinction and opulence professed Christian tenets, and it is sometimes found in connection with the imperial family. Still Rome, to the last, seems to have been the centre of the Pagan interest, though other causes will hereafter appear for this curious fact in the conflict of the two religions.

Severus wielded the sceptre of the world with the vigour of the older empire. But his earlier years were occupied in the establishment of his power over the hostile factions of his competitors, and by his Eastern wars ; his later by the settlement of the remote province of Britain (1). Severus was at one time the protector, at another the persecutor, of Christianity. Local circumstances appear to have influenced his conduct, on both occasions, to the Christian party. A Christian named Proculus, a dependent, probably, upon his favourite freed slave Evodus, had been so fortunate as to restore him to health by anointing him with oil, and was received into the imperial family, in which he retained his honourable situation till his death. Not improbably through the same connection, a Christian nurse and a Christian preceptor formed the disposition of the young Caracalla ; and, till the natural ferocity of his character ripened under the fatal influence of jealous ambition, fraternal hatred, and unbounded power, the gentleness of his manners, and the sweetness of his temper, enchanted and attached his family, his friends, the senate, and the people of Rome. The people beheld with satisfaction the infant pupil of Christianity turning aside his head and weeping at the barbarity of the ordinary public spectacles, in which criminals were exposed to wild-beasts (2). The Christian interest at the court repressed the occasional outbursts of popular animosity : many Christians of rank and distinction enjoyed the avowed favour of the Emperor. Their security may partly be attributed to their calm determination not to mingle themselves up with the contending factions for the empire. During the conflict of parties, they had refused to espouse the cause either of Niger or Albinus. Retired within themselves, they rendered their prompt and cheerful obedience to the ruling Emperor. The implacable vengeance which

Reign of
Severus.
A. D. 193
to 210.

Infancy of
Caracalla.

Peaceful
conduct of
the Chris-
tians.

(1) Compare Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, iii. part 1. p. 146. (2) Spartian. Anton. Caracalla, p. 404.

Severus wreaked on the senate, for their real or suspected inclination to the party of Albinus, his remorseless execution of so many of the noblest of the aristocracy, may have placed in a stronger light the happier fortune, and commended the unimpeachable loyalty, of the Christians. The provincial governors, as usual, reflected the example of the court; some adopted merciful expedients to avoid the necessity of carrying the laws into effect against those Christians who were denounced before their tribunals; while the more venal humanity of others extorted a considerable profit from the Christians for their security. The unlawful religion, in many places, purchased its peace at the price of a regular tax, which was paid by other illegal, and mostly infamous, professions. This traffic with the authorities was sternly denounced by some of the more ardent believers, as degrading to the religion, and an ignominious barter of the hopes and glories of martyrdom (1).

Persecu-
tion in the
East.

A. c. 202.

Christi-
anity not
persecuted
in the
West.

Probably
causes.

Egypt.

Such was the flourishing and peaceful state of Christianity during the early part of the reign of Severus. In the East, at a later period, he embraced a sterner policy. During the conflict with Niger, the Samaritans had espoused the losing, the Jews the successful, party. The edicts of Severus were, on the whole, favourable to the Jews, but the prohibition to circumcise proselytes was re-enacted during his residence in Syria, in the tenth year of his reign. The same prohibition against the admission of new proselytes was extended to the Christians. But this edict may have been intended to allay the violence of the hostile factions in Syria. Of the persecution under Severus there are few, if any, traces in the West (2). It is confined to Syria, perhaps Cappadocia, to Egypt, and to Africa; and, in the latter provinces, appears as the act of hostile governors, proceeding upon the existing laws, rather than the consequence of any recent edict of the Emperor. The Syrian Eusebius may have exaggerated local acts of oppression, of which the sad traces were recorded in his native country, into a general persecution: he admits that Alexandria was the chief scene of Christian suffering. The date and the scene of the persecution may lend a clue to its origin. From Syria, the Emperor, exactly at this time, proceeded to Egypt. He surveyed, with wondering interest, the monuments of Egyptian glory and of Egyptian superstition (3), the temples of Memphis, the Pyramids, the Labyrinth, the Memnonium. The plague alone prevented him from continuing his excursions into Ethiopia. The dark and relentless mind of Severus appears to have been strongly impressed with the religion of Serapis. In either character, as the

(1) Sed quid non timiditas persuadebit, quasi et fugere scriptura permittat, et redimere præcipiat.*** Nescio dolendum an erubescendum sit cum in matricibus beneficiariorum et curiosorum, inter tabernarios et lanios et fures balnearum et aleones et lenones, Christiani quoque vectigales continentur. Tertull. de fugâ, c. 13.

(2) Nous ne trouvons rien de considérable touchant les martyrs que la persécution de Sévère a pu faire à Rome et en Italie. Tillemont. St. Andeole, and the other martyrs in Gaul (Tillemont, p. 160.), are of more than suspicious authority.

(3) Spartian, Hist. Aug. p. 553.

great Pantheistic deity, which absorbed the attributes and functions of all the more ancient gods of Egypt, or in his more limited character, as the Pluto of their mythology, the lord of the realm of departed spirits, Serapis (1) was likely to captivate the imagination of Severus, and to suit those gloomier moods in which it delighted in brooding over the secrets of futurity; and, having realised the proud prognostics of greatness, which his youth had watched with hope, now began to dwell on the darker omens of decline and dissolution (2). The hour of imperial favour was likely to be seized by the Egyptian priesthood to obtain the mastery, and to wreak their revenge on this new foreign religion, which was making such rapid progress throughout the province, and the whole of Africa. Whether or not the Emperor actually authorised the persecution, his countenance would strengthen the Pagan interest, and encourage the obsequious Præfect (3) in adopting violent measures. Lætus would be vindicating the religion of the Emperor in asserting the superiority of Serapis; and the superiority of Serapis could be by no means so effectually asserted, as by the oppression of his most powerful adversaries. Alexandria was the ripe and pregnant soil of religious feud and deadly animosity. The hostile parties which divided the city—the Jews, the Pagans, and the Christians—though perpetually blending and modifying each other's doctrines, and forming schools in which Judaism allegorised itself into Platonism, Platonism having assimilated itself to the higher Egyptian mythology, soared into Christianity, and a Platonic Christianity, from a religion, became a mystic philosophy—awaited, nevertheless, the signal for persecution, and for license to draw off in sanguinary factions, and to settle the controversies of the schools by bloody tumults in the streets (4). The perpetual syncretism of opinions instead of leading to peace and charity, seemed to inflame the deadly animosity; and the philosophical spirit which attempted to blend all the higher doctrines into a lofty Eclectic system, had no effect in harmonising the minds of the different sects to mutual toleration and amity. It was now the triumph of Paganism. The controversy with Christianity was carried on, by burning their priests and torturing their virgins, until the catechetical or elementary schools of learning, by which the Alexandrian Christians trained up their pupils for the reception of their more mysterious doctrines, were deserted, the young Origen alone laboured, with indefatigable and successful ac-

(1) Compare de Guignaut, *Serapis et son Origine*.

(2) Spartian had the advantage of consulting the autobiography of the Emperor Severus. Had time but spared us the original, and taken the whole Augustan history in exchange!

(3) His name was Lætus. Euseb, *Ecl. Hist.* vi. 2.

(4) Leonidas, the father of Origen, perished in this persecution. Origen was only kept away

from joining him in his imprisonment, and if possible, in his martyrdom, by the prudent stratagem of his mother, who concealed all his clothes. The boy of seventeen sent a letter to his father, entreating him not to allow his parental affection for himself and his six brothers to stand in his way of obtaining the martyr's crown. Euseb. vi. 2. The property of Leonidas was confiscated to the imperial treasury. *Ibid.*

tivity, to supply the void caused by the general desertion of the persecuted teachers (1).

Africa.

The African Præfect followed the example of Lætus in Egypt. In no part of the Roman empire had Christianity taken more deep and permanent root than in the province of Africa, then crowded with rich and populous cities, and forming, with Egypt, the granary of the Western world ; but which many centuries of Christian feud, Vandal invasion, and Mahometan barbarism, have blasted to a thinly-peopled desert. Up to this period, this secluded region had gone on advancing in its uninterrupted course of civilisation. Since the battle of Munda, the African province had stood aloof from the tumults and desolation which attended the changes in the imperial dynasty. As yet it had raised no competitor for the empire, though Severus, the ruling monarch, was of African descent. The single legion, which was considered adequate to protect its remote tranquillity from the occasional incursions of the Moorish tribes, had been found sufficient for its purpose. The Paganism of the African cities was probably weaker than in other parts of the empire. It had no ancient and sacred associations with national pride. The new cities had raised new temples, to gods foreign to the region. The religion of Carthage (2), if it had not entirely perished with the final destruction of the city, maintained but a feeble hold upon the Italianised inhabitants. The Carthage of the empire was a Roman city. If Christianity tended to mitigate the fierce spirit of the inhabitants of these burning regions, it acquired itself a depth and empasioned vehemence, which perpetually broke through all restraints of moderation, charity, and peace. From Tertullian to Augustine, the climate seems to be working into the language, into the essence of Christianity. Here disputes madden into feuds ; and feuds, which, in other countries, were allayed by time, or died away of themselves, grew into obstinate, implacable, and irreconcilable factions.

African
Christianity.

African Christianity had no communion with the dreamy and speculative genius of the East. It sternly rejected the wild and poetic impersonations, the daring cosmogonies, of the Gnostic sects : it was severe, simple, practical, in its creed ; it governed by its strong and imperious hold upon the feelings, by profound and agitating emotion. It eagerly received the rigid asceticism of the antimaterialist system, while it disdained the fantastic theories by which it accounted for the origin of evil. The imagination had another office than that of following out its own fanciful creations ; it spoke directly to the fears and to the passions ; it delighted in realising the terrors of the final judgment ; in arraying, in the most appalling language, the gloomy mysteries of future retribution.

(1) Euseb. Eccles. Hist. vi. 2.

(2) Compare Munter, Relig. der Carthager. The worship of the Dea celestis, the Queen of Heaven, should perhaps be excepted. See, for-

ward, the reign of Elagabalus. Even in the fifth century the Queen of Heaven, according to Salvian (de Gubernatione Dei, lib. viii.), shared the worship of Carthage with Christ.

This character appears in the dark splendour of Tertullian's writings; engages him in contemptuous and relentless warfare against the Gnostic opinions, and their latest and most dangerous champion, Marcion; till, at length, it hardens into the severe, yet simpler, enthusiasm of Montanism. It appears allied with the stern assertion of ecclesiastical order and sacerdotal domination, in the earnest and zealous Cyprian; it is still manifestly working, though in a chastened and loftier form, in the deep and impassioned, but comprehensive, mind of Augustine.

Tertullian alone belongs to the present period, and Tertullian is, perhaps, the representative and the perfect type of this Africanism. It is among the most remarkable illustrations of the secret unity which connected the whole Christian world, that opinions first propagated on the shores of the Euxine found their most vigorous antagonist on the coast of Africa, while a new and fervid enthusiasm, which arose in Phrygia, captivated the kindred spirit of Tertullian. Montanism harmonised with African Christianity in the simplicity of its creed, which did not depart from the predominant form of Christianity; in the extreme rigour of its fasts (for while Gnosticism outbid the religion of Jesus and his Apostles, Montanism outbid the Gnostics in its austerities (1); it admitted marriage as a necessary evil, but it denounced second nuptials as an inexcusable sin) (2); above all, in its resolving religion into inward emotion. There is a singular correspondence between Phrygian Heathenism and the Phrygian Christianity of Montanus and his followers. The Orgiasm, the inward rapture, the working of a divine influence upon the soul, till it was wrought up to a state of holy frenzy, had continually sent forth the priests of Cybele, and females of a highly excitable temperament, into the Western provinces (3); whom the vulgar beheld with awe, as manifestly possessed by the divinity; whom the philosophic party, equally mistaken, treated with contempt, as imposters. So, with the followers of Montanus (and women were his most ardent votaries), with Prisca and Maximilla, the apostles of his sect, the pure, and meek, and peaceful spirit of Christianity became a wild, a visionary; a frantic enthusiasm: it worked paroxysms of intense devotion; it made the soul partake of all the fever of phy-

Montan-
ism

(1) The Western churches were, as yet, generally averse to the excessive fasting subsequently introduced to so great an extent, by the monastic spirit. See the curious vision of Attalus, the martyr of Lyons, in which a fellow-prisoner, Alcibiades, who had long lived on bread and water alone, was reproved for not making free use of God's creatures; and thus giving offence to the church. The churches of Lyons and Vienne, having been founded from Phrygia, were anxious to avoid the least imputation of Montanism. Euseb. Eccl. Hist. v. 3.

(2) The prophetesses abandoned their husbands, according to Apollonius apud Euseb. v. 18.

(3) The effect of natural character and temperament on the opinions and form of religion did not escape the observation of the Christian writers. There is a curious passage on the Phrygian national character in Socrates, H. E. iv. 28.—“The Phrygians are a chaste and temperate people; they seldom swear; the Scythians and Thracians are choleric; the Eastern nations more disposed to immorality; the Paphlagonians and Phrygians to neither: they do not care for the theatre or the games; prostitution is unusual.” Their suppressed passions seem to have broken out at all periods in religious emotions.

sical excitement. As in all ages, where the mild and rational faith of Christ has been too calm and serene for persons brooding to madness over their own internal emotions, it proclaimed itself a religious advancement, a more sublime and spiritual Christianity. Judaism was the infancy, Christianity the youth, the revelation of the Spirit the manhood of the human soul. It was this Spirit, this Paraclete, which resided in all its fulness in the bosom of Montanus; his adversaries asserted that he gave himself out as the Paraclete; but it is more probable that his vague and mystic language was misunderstood, or, possibly misrepresented, by the malice of his adversaries. In Montanism the sectarian, the exclusive spirit, was at its height; and this claim to higher perfection, this seclusion from the vulgar race of Christians, whose weakness had been too often shown in the hour of trial; who had neither attained the height of his austerity, nor courted martyrdom, nor refused all ignominious compromises with the persecuting authorities with the unbending rigour which he demanded, would still further commend the claims of Montanism to the homage of Tertullian.

Apology
of Tertul-
lian.

During this persecution, Tertullian stood forth as the apologist of Christianity; and the tone of his apology is characteristic not only of the individual, but of his native country, while it is no less illustrative of the altered position of Christianity. The address of Tertullian to Scapula, the Præfect of Africa, is no longer in the tone of tranquil expostulation against the barbarity of persecuting blameless and unoffending men, still less that of humble supplication. Every sentence breathes scorn, defiance, menace. It heaps contempt upon the gods of Paganism; it avows the determination of the Christians to expel the *dæmons* from the respect and adoration of mankind. It condescends not to exculpate the Christians from being the cause of the calamities which had recently laid waste the province; the torrent rains which had swept away the harvests; the fires which had heaped with ruin the streets of Carthage; the sun which had been preternaturally eclipsed, when at its meridian, during an assembly of the province at Utica. All these portentous signs are unequivocally ascribed to the vengeance of the Christian's God, visiting the guilt of obstinate idolatry. The persecutors of the Christians are warned by the awful examples of Roman dignitaries who had been stricken blind, and eaten with worms, as the chastisement of Heaven for their injustice and cruelty to the worshippers of Christ. Scapula himself is sternly admonished to take warning by their fate; while the orator, by no means deficient, at the same time, in dexterous address, reminds him of the humane policy of others: — "Your cruelty will be our glory. Thousands of both sexes, and of every rank, will eagerly crowd to martyrdom, exhaust your fires, and weary your swords. Carthage must be decimated; the principal persons in the city, even, per-

haps, your own most intimate friends and kindred, must be sacrificed. Vainly will you war against God. Magistrates are but men, and will suffer the common lot of mortality; but Christianity will endure as long as the Roman empire, and the duration of the empire will be coeval with that of the world."

History, even Christian history, is confined to more general views of public affairs, and dwells too exclusively on what may be called the high places of human life; but whenever a glimpse is afforded of lowlier, and of more common life, it is, perhaps, best fulfilling its office of presenting a lively picture of the times, if it allows itself occasionally some more minute detail, and illustrates the manner in which the leading events of particular periods affected individuals not in the highest station.

Of all the histories of martyrdom, none is so unexaggerated in its tone and language, so entirely unincumbered with miracle; none abounds in such exquisite touches of nature,* or, on the whole, from its minuteness and circumstantiality, breathes such an air of truth and reality, as that of Perpetua and Felicitas, two African females. Their death is ascribed, in the Acts, to the year of the accession of Geta (1), the son of Severus. Though there was no general persecution at that period, yet, as the Christians held their lives, at all times, liable to the outburst of popular resentment, or the caprice of an arbitrary proconsul, there is much probability that a time of general rejoicing might be that in which the Christians, who were always accused of a disloyal reluctance to mingle in the popular festivities, and who kept aloof from the public sacrifices on such anniversaries, would be most exposed to persecution. The youthful catechumens, Revocatus and Felicitas, Saturninus and Secundulus, were apprehended, and with them Vivia Perpetua, a woman of good family, liberal education, and honourably married. Perpetua was about twenty-two years old; her father and mother were living; she had two brothers,—one of them, like herself, a catechumen,—and an infant at her breast. The history of the martyrdom is related by Perpetua herself, and is said to have been written by her own hand:—"When we were in the hands of the persecutors, my father, in his tender affection, persevered in his endeavours to pervert me from the faith (1). 'My

Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas.

A. D. 202.

(1) The external evidence to the authenticity of these Acts is not quite equal to the internal. They were first published by Lucas Holstenius, from a MS. in the convent of Monte Casino; re-edited by Valesius at Paris, and by Ruinart, in his *Acta Sincera Martyrum*, p. 90., who collated two other MSS. There appear, however, strong indications that the Acts of these African Martyrs are translated from the Greek; at least it is difficult otherwise to account for the frequent untranslated Greek words and idioms in the text. The following are examples: C. iii. *turbatum beneficio*, χαρίν c. iv. *hene venitisti*, τεγνον, τεκνόν' viii. in oramate, a vision, ὄραματι

diadema or diastema, an interval, διαστήμα c. x. *afe, afe*. xii. *agios, agios, agios*.

There are indeed some auspicious marks of Montanism which perhaps prevented these Acts from being more generally known.

It is not quite clear where these martyrs suffered. Valesius supposed Carthage, others, in that one of the two towns called Tuburbium which was situated in proconsular Africa.

(2) *Dejicere*, to cast me down, is the expressive phrase, not uncommon among the early Christians.

father, this vessel, be it a pitcher, or any thing else, can we call it by any other name?' 'Certainly not,' he replied. 'Nor can I call myself by any name but that of Christian?' My father looked as if he could have plucked my eyes out; but he only harassed me, and departed, persuaded by the arguments of the devil. Then, after being a few days without seeing my father, I was enabled to give thanks to God, and his absence was tempered to my spirit. After a few days we were baptized, and the waters of baptism seemed to give power of endurance to my body. Again a few days, and we were cast into prison. I was terrified; for I had never before seen such total darkness. O miserable day! — from the dreadful heat of the prisoners crowded together, and the insults of the soldiers. But I was wrung with solicitude for my infant. Two of our deacons, however, by the payment of money, obtained our removal for some hours in the day to a more open part of the prison. Each of the captives then pursued his usual occupation; but I sat and suckled my infant, who was wasting away with hunger. In my anxiety, I addressed and consoled my mother, and commended my child to my brother; and I began to pine away at seeing them pining away on my account. And for many days I suffered this anxiety, and accustomed my child to remain in the prison with me; and I immediately recovered my strength, and was relieved from my toil and trouble for my infant, and the prison became to me like a palace; and I was happier there than I should have been any where else.

"My brother then said to me, 'Perpetua, you are exalted to such dignity, that you may pray for a vision, and it shall be shown you whether our doom is martyrdom or release.'" This is the language of Montanism; but the vision is exactly that which might haunt the slumbers of the Christian in a high state of religious enthusiasm; it showed merely the familiar images of the faith, arranging themselves into form. She saw a lofty ladder of gold, ascending to heaven; around it were swords, lances, hooks; and a great dragon lay at its foot, to seize those who would ascend. Saturus, a distinguished Christian, went up first; beckoned her to follow, and controlled the dragon by the name of Jesus Christ. She ascended, and found herself in a spacious garden, in which sat a man with white hair, in the garb of a shepherd, milking his sheep (1), with many myriads around him. He welcomed her, and gave her a morsel of cheese; and "I received it with folded hands, and ate it; and all the saints around exclaimed, 'amen.' I awoke at the sound, with the sweet taste in my mouth, and I related it to my brother; and we knew that our martyrdom was at hand, and we began to have no hope in this world."

(1) Bishop Munter, in his *Sinnbilder der alten Christen*, refers to this passage, to illustrate one of the oldest has reliefs of Christian art. II. i. p. 62.

“ After a few days, there was a rumour that we were to be heard. And my father came from the city, wasted away with anxiety, to pervert me; and he said, ‘ Have compassion, O my daughter! on my grey hairs; have compassion on thy father, if he is worthy of the name of father. If I have thus brought thee up to the flower of thine age; if I have preferred thee to all thy brothers, do not expose me to this disgrace. Look on thy brother; look on thy mother, and thy aunt; look on thy child, who cannot live without thee. Do not destroy us all.’ Thus spake my father, kissing my hands in his fondness, and throwing himself at my feet; and in his tears he called me not his daughter, but his mistress (*domina*). And I was grieved for the grey hairs of my father, because he alone, of all our family, did not rejoice in my martyrdom: and I consoled him, saying, ‘ In this trial, what God wills, will take place. Know that we are not in our own power, but in that of God.’ And he went away sorrowing.

“ Another day, while we were at dinner, we were suddenly seized and carried off to trial; and we came to the town. The report spread rapidly, and an immense multitude was assembled. We were placed at the bar; the rest were interrogated, and made their confession. And it came to my turn; and my father instantly appeared with my child, and he drew me down the step, and said in a beseeching tone; ‘ Have compassion on your infant;’ and Hilarianus the procurator, who exercised the power of life and death for the Proconsul Timinianus, who had died, said, ‘ Spare the grey hairs of your parent; spare your infant; offer sacrifice for the welfare of the Emperor.’ And I answered, ‘ I will not sacrifice.’ ‘ Art thou a Christian?’ said Hilarianus; I answered, ‘ I am a Christian.’ And while my father stood there to persuade me, Hilarianus ordered him to be thrust down, and beaten with rods. And the misfortune of my father grieved me; and I was as much grieved for his old age as if I had been scourged myself. He then passed sentence on us all, and condemned us to the wild-beasts; and we went back in cheerfulness to the prison. And because I was accustomed to suckle my infant, and to keep it with me in the prison, I sent Pomponius the deacon to seek it from my father. But my father would not send it; but, by the will of God, the child no longer desired the breast, and I suffered no uneasiness; lest at such a time I should be afflicted by the sufferings of my child, or by pains in my breasts.”

Her visions now grow more frequent and vivid. The name of her brother Dinocrates suddenly occurred to her in her prayers. He had died at seven years old, of a loathsome disease, no doubt without Christian baptism. She had a vision in which Dinocrates appeared in a place of profound darkness, where there was a pool of water, which he could not reach on account of his small stature.

In a second vision, Dinocrates appeared again; the pool rose up and touched him, and he drank a full goblet of the water. "And when he was satisfied, he went away to play, as infants are wont, and I awoke; and I knew that he was translated from the place of punishment (1)."

Again a few days, and the keeper of the prison, profoundly impressed by their conduct, and beginning to discern "the power of God within them," admitted many of the brethren to visit them, for mutual consolation. "And as the day of the games approached, my father entered, worn out with affliction, and began to pluck his beard, and to throw himself down with his face upon the ground, and to wish that he could hasten his death; and to speak words which might have moved any living creature. And I was grieved for the sorrows of his old age." The night before they were to be exposed in the arena, she dreamed that she was changed to a man; fought and triumphed over a huge and terrible Egyptian gladiator; and she put her foot upon his head, and she received the crown, and passed out of the Vivarian gate, and knew that she had triumphed not over man but over the devil. The vision of Saturus, which he related for their consolation, was more splendid. He ascended into the realms of light, into a beautiful garden, and to a palace, the walls of which were light; and there he was welcomed, not only by the angels, but by all the friends who had preceded him in the glorious career. It is singular that, among the rest, he saw a bishop and a priest, among whom there had been some dissension. And while Perpetua was conversing with them, the angels interfered and insisted on their perfect reconciliation. Some kind of blame seems to be attached to the bishop Optatus, because some of his flock appeared as if they came from the factions of the circus, with the spirit of mortal strife not yet allayed.

The narrative then proceeds to another instance of the triumph of faith over the strongest of human feelings, the love of a young mother for her offspring. Felicitas was in the eighth month of her pregnancy. She feared, and her friends shared in her apprehension, that, on that account, her martyrdom might be delayed. They prayed together, and her travail came on. In her agony at that most painful period of delivery, she gave way to her sufferings. "How then," said one of the servants of the prison, "if you cannot endure these pains, will you endure exposure to the wild-beasts?" She replied, "I bear now my own sufferings; then, there will be one within me who will bear my sufferings for me, because I shall suffer for his sake." She brought forth a girl, of whom a Christian sister took the charge.

Perpetua maintained her calmness to the end. While they were

(1) This is evidently a kind of purgatory.

treated with severity by a tribune, who feared lest they should be delivered from the prison by enchantment, Perpetua remonstrated with a kind of mournful pleasantry, and said that, if ill-used, they would do no credit to the birthday of Cæsar : the victims ought to be fattened for the sacrifice. But their language and demeanour was not always so calm and gentle ; the words of some became those of defiance—almost of insult ; and this is related with as much admiration as the more tranquil sublimity of the former incidents. To the people who gazed on them, in their importunate curiosity, at their agape, they said, “ Is not to-morrow’s spectacle enough to satiate your hate ? To-day you look on us with friendly faces, to-morrow you will be our deadly enemies. Mark well our countenances, that you may know them again on the day of judgment.” And to Hilarianus, on his tribunal, they said, “ Thou judgest us, but God will judge thee.” At this language, the exasperated people demanded that they should be scourged. When taken out to execution they declined, and were permitted to decline, the profane dress in which they were to be clad ; the men, that of the priests of Saturn ; the women, that of the priestesses of Ceres (1). They came forward in their simple attire, Perpetua singing psalms. The men were exposed to leopards and bears ; the women were hung up naked in nets, to be gored by a furious cow. But even the excited populace shrunk with horror at the spectacle of two young and delicate women, one recently recovered from childbirth, in this state. They were recalled by acclamation, and in mercy brought forward again, clad in loose robes (2). Perpetua was tossed, her garment was rent ; but, more conscious of her wounded modesty than of pain, she drew the robe over the part of her person which was exposed. She then calmly clasped up her hair, because it did not become a martyr to suffer with dishevelled locks, the sign of sorrow. She then raised up the fainting and mortally wounded Felicitas, and the cruelty of the populace being for a time appeased, they were permitted to retire. Perpetua seemed wrapt in ecstacy, and as if awaking from sleep, inquired when she was to be exposed to the beast. She could scarcely be made to believe what had taken place ; her last words tenderly admonished her brother to be steadfast in the faith. We may close the scene by intimating that all were speedily released from their sufferings, and entered into their glory. Perpetua guided with her own hand the merciful sword of the gladiator which relieved her from her agony.

This African persecution, which laid the seeds of future schisms and fatal feuds, lasted till, at least, the second year of Caracalla. From its close, except during the short reign of Maximin, Chris-

Caracalla
Geta.
A. D. 211
—217.

(1) This was an unusual circumstance ; and ascribed to the devil.

(2) I am not sure that I am correct in this part

of the version ; it appears to me to be the sense. “ Ita revocate discinguntur ” is paraphrased by Lucas Holstenius, *revocate et discinctis induta.*

Elagabalus emperor.
A. D. 218.

tianity enjoyed uninterrupted peace till the reign of Decius (1). But, during this period occurred a remarkable event in the religious history of Rome. The pontiff of one of the wild forms of the Nature-worship of the East appeared in the city of Rome as Emperor; the ancient rites of Baalpeor, but little changed in the course of ages, intruded themselves into the sanctuary of the Capitoline Jove, and offended at once the religious majesty and the graver decency of Roman manners (2). Elagabalus derived his name from the Syrian appellative of the sun; he had been educated in the precincts of the temple; and the Emperor of Rome was lost and absorbed in the priest of an effeminate superstition. The new religion did not steal in under the modest demeanour of a stranger, claiming the common rites of hospitality, as the national faith of a subject people: it entered with a public pomp, as though to supersede and eclipse the ancestral deities of Rome. The god Elagabalus was conveyed in solemn procession through the wondering provinces; his symbols were received with all the honour of the Supreme Deity. The conical black stone, which was adored at Emesa, was, no doubt, in its origin, one of those obscene symbols which appear in almost every form of the Oriental nature-worship. The rudeness of ancient art had allowed it to remain in less offensive shapelessness; and, not improbably, the original symbolic meaning had become obsolete. The Sun had become the visible type of Deity, and the object of adoration. The mysterious principle of generation, of which, in the primitive religion of nature, he was the type and image, gave place to the noblest object of human idolatry—the least debasing representative of the Great Supreme. The idol of Emesa entered Rome in solemn procession; a magnificent temple was built upon the Palatine Hill; a number of altars stood round, on which every day the most sumptuous offerings—hecatombs of oxen, countless sheep, the most costly aromatics, the choicest wines were offered; streams of blood and wine were constantly flowing down; while the highest dignitaries of the empire—commanders of legions, rulers of provinces, the gravest senators, appeared as humble ministers, clad in the loose and flowing robes and linen sandals of the East, among the lascivious dances and the wanton music of oriental drums and cymbals. These degrading practices were the only way to civil and military preferment. The whole senate and equestrian order stood around; and those who played ill the part of adoration, or whose secret murmurs incautiously betrayed their devout indignation (for this insult to the ancient religion of Rome awakened some sense of shame in the degenerate and servile aristocracy), were put to death. The most sacred

(1) From 212 to 249. — Caracalla, 211; Macrinus, 217; Elagabalus, 218; Alexander Severus, 222; Maximin and the Gordians, 235—244; Philip, 244; Decius, 249.

(2) Lampreidius Heliogabalus. Dion Cassius, l. lxxix. Herodian, v.

and patriotic sentiments cherished above all the hallowed treasures of the city, the Palladium, the image of Minerva. Popular veneration worshipped, in distant awe, the unseen deity; for profane eye might never behold the virgin image. The inviolability of the Roman dominion was inseparably connected with the uncontaminated sanctity of the Palladium. The Syrian declared his intention of wedding the ancient tutelary goddess to his foreign deity. The image was publicly brought forth; exposed to the sullyng gaze of the multitude; solemnly wedded, and insolently repudiated by the unworthy stranger. A more appropriate bride was found in the kindred Syrian deity, worshipped under the name of Astarte in the East, in Carthage, as the Queen of Heaven—Venus Urania, as translated into the mythological language of the West. She was brought from Carthage. The whole city—the whole of Italy—was commanded to celebrate the bridal festival; and the nuptials of the two foreign deities might appear to complete the triumph over the insulted divinities of Rome. Nothing was sacred to the voluptuous Syrian. He introduced the manners as well as the religion of the East; his rapid succession of wives imitated the polygamy of an Oriental despot; and his vices not merely corrupted the morals, but insulted the most sacred feelings, of the people. He tore a vestal virgin from her sanctuary, to suffer his polluting embraces; he violated the sanctuary itself; attempted to make himself master of the mystic coffer in which the sacred deposit was enshrined: it was said that the pious fraud of the priesthood deceived him with a counterfeit, which he dashed to pieces in his anger. It was openly asserted, that the worship of the sun, under his name of Elagabalus, was to supersede all other worship. If we may believe the biographies in the Augustan history, a more ambitious scheme of a universal religion had dawned upon the mind of the Emperor; and that the Jewish, the Samaritan, even the Christian, were to be fused and recast into one great system, of which the sun was to be the central object of adoration (1). At all events, the deities of Rome were actually degraded before the public gaze into humble ministers of Elagabalus. Every year of the Emperor's brief reign, the god was conveyed from his Palatine temple to a suburban edifice of still more sumptuous magnificence. The statue passed in a car drawn by six horses. The Emperor of the world, his eyes stained with paint, ran and danced before it with antic gestures of adoration. The earth was strewn with gold dust; flowers and chaplets were scattered by the people, while the images of all the other gods, the splendid ornaments and vessels of all their temples, were carried, like the spoils of subject nations, in the annual ovation of the

Worship
of the sun
in Rome.

Religious
innova-
tions me-
ditated by
Elaga-
balus.

(1) Id agens ne quis Romæ Deus nisi Heliogabalus coheretur. Dicitur prætere, Judæorum et Samaritanorum religiones, et Christianam devo-

tionem, illuc transferendam, ut omnium cultu-
rum secretum Heliogabali sacerdotium teneret.
p. 461

Phœnician deity. Even human sacrifices, and if we may credit the monstrous fact, the most beautiful sons of the noblest families, were offered on the altar of this Moloch of the East (1).

It is impossible to suppose that the weak and crumbling edifice of Paganism was not shaken to its base by this extraordinary revolution. An ancient religion cannot thus be insulted without losing much of its majesty : its hold upon the popular veneration is violently torn asunder. With its more sincere votaries, the general animosity to foreign, particularly to Eastern, religions, might be enflamed or deepened ; and Christianity might share in some part of the detestation excited by the excesses of a superstition so opposite in its nature. But others whose faith had been shaken, and whose moral feelings revolted, by a religion whose essential character was sensuality, and whose licentious tendency had been so disgustingly illustrated by the unspeakable pollutions of its imperial patron, would hasten to embrace that purer faith which was most remote from the religion of Elagabalus.

Alexander
Severus
Emperor.
A. D. 222.

Mammaea.

From the policy of the court, as well as the pure and amiable character of the successor of Elagabalus, the more offensive parts of this foreign superstition disappeared with their imperial patron. But the old Roman religion was not reinstated in its jealous and unmingled dignity. Alexander Severus had been bred in another school ; and the influence which swayed him, during the earlier part at least of his reign, was of a different character from that which had formed the mind of Elagabalus. It was the mother of Elagabalus who, however she might blush with shame at the impurities of her effeminate son, had consecrated him to the service of the deity in Emesa. The mother of Alexander Severus, the able, perhaps crafty and rapacious, Mammæa, had at least held intercourse with the Christians of Syria. She had conversed with the celebrated Origen, and listened to his exhortations, if without conversion, still not without respect. Alexander, though he had neither the religious education, the pontifical character, nor the dissolute manners, of his predecessor, was a Syrian, with no hereditary attachment to the Roman form of Paganism. He seems to have affected a kind of universalism : he paid decent respect to the gods of the Capitol ; he held in honour the Egyptian worship, and enlarged the temples of Isis and Serapis. In his own palace, with respectful indifference, he enshrined, as it were, as his household deities, the representatives of the different religious or theophilosophic systems which were prevalent in the Roman empire,—Orpheus, Abraham, Christ, and Apollonius of Tyana. The first of these represented the wisdom of the mysteries, the purified nature-worship, which had laboured to elevate the popular mythology into a noble and coherent allegorism.

(1) *Cedit et humanas hostias, lectis ad hoc patrimis et matrimis, credo ut major esset utriusque nobilibus et decoris per omnem Italianam que parenti dolor.* Lamprid. *Heliogabalus.*

It is singular that Abraham, rather than Moses, was placed at the head of Judaism : it is possible that the traditionary sanctity which attached to the first parent of the Jewish people, and of many of the Arab tribes, and which was afterwards embodied in the Mahometan Koran, was floating in the East, and would comprehend, as it were, the opinions not only of the Jews, but of a much wider circle of the Syrian natives. In Apollonius, was centered the more modern Theurgy, the magic which commanded the intermediate spirits between the higher world and the world of man ; the more spiritual polytheism which had released the subordinate deities from their human form, and maintained them in a constant intercourse with the soul of man. Christianity, in the person of its founder, even where it did not command authority as a religion, had nevertheless lost the character under which it had so long and so unjustly laboured, of animosity to mankind. Though he was considered but as one of the sages who shared in the homage paid to their beneficent wisdom, the followers of Jesus had now lived down all the bitter hostility which had so generally prevailed against them. The homage of Alexander Severus may be a fair test of the general sentiment of the more intelligent Heathen of his time (1). It is clear that the exclusive spirit of Greek and Roman civilisation is broken down : it is not now Socrates or Plato, Epicurus or Zeno, who are considered the sole guiding intellects of human wisdom. These Eastern *barbarians* are considered rivals, if not superior, to the philosophers of Greece. The world is betraying its irresistible yearning towards a *religion* ; and these were the first overtures, as it were, to more general submission.

In the reign of Alexander Severus, at least commenced the great change in the outward appearance of Christianity. Christian bishops were admitted, even at the court, in a recognised official character ; and Christian churches began to rise in different parts of the empire, and to possess endowments in land (2). To the astonishment of the Heathen, their religion had as yet appeared without temple or altar ; their religious assemblies had been held in privacy : it was yet a domestic worship. Even the Jew had his public synagogue or his more secluded proseucha ; but where the Christians met was indicated by no separate and distinguished dwelling ; the cemetery of their dead, the sequestered grove, the private chamber, contained their peaceful assemblies. Their privacy was at once their security and their danger. On the one hand, there was no well-known edifice in which the furious and excited rabble could surprise the general

Change in the relation of Christianity to society.

(1) Jablonski wrote a very ingenious essay to show that Alexander Severus was converted to Gnostic Christianity. *Opuscula*, vol. iv. Compare Heyne, *Opuscula*, vi. p. 169, et seqq.

(2) Tillemont, as Gibbon observes, assigns the date of the earliest Christian churches to the reign of Alexander Severus ; Mr. Moyle to that of

Gallienus. The difference is very slight, and after all, the change from a private building, set apart for a particular use, and a public one of no architectural pretensions, may have been almost imperceptible. The passage of Laupridius appears conclusive in favour of Tillemont.

First
Christian
churches.

body of the Christians, and wreak its vengeance by indiscriminate massacre; on the other, the jealousy of the government against all private associations would be constantly kept on the alert; and a religion without a temple was so inexplicably a problem to Pagan feeling, that it would strengthen and confirm all the vague imputations of Atheism, or of criminal license in these mysterious meetings, which seemed to shun the light of day. Their religious usages must now have become much better known, as Alexander borrowed their mode of publishing the names of those who were proposed for ordination, and established a similar proceeding with regard to all candidates for civil office; and a piece of ground, in Rome, which was litigated by a company of victuallers, was awarded by the Emperor himself to the Christians, upon the principle that it was better that it should be devoted to the worship of God in any form, than applied to a profane and unworthy use (1).

These buildings were no doubt, as yet, of modest height and unpretending form; but the religion was thus publicly recognised as one of the various forms of worship which the government did not prohibit from opening the gates of its temples to mankind.

The progress of Christianity during all this period, though silent, was uninterrupted. The miseries which were gradually involving the whole Roman empire, from the conflicts and the tyranny of a rapid succession of masters; from taxation gradually becoming more grinding and burdensome; and the still multiplying inroads and expanding devastations of the barbarians, assisted its progress. Many took refuge in a religion which promised beatitude in a future state of being, from the inevitable evils of this life.

Influence
of Christi-
anity on
Heathen-
ism.

But in no respect is its progress more evident and remarkable than in the influence of Christianity on Heathenism itself. Though philosophy, which had long been the antagonist and most dangerous enemy of the popular religion, now made apparently common cause with it against the common enemy, Christianity; yet there had been an unperceived and amicable approximation between the two religions. Heathenism, as interpreted by philosophy, almost found favour with some of the more moderate Christian apologists; while, as we have seen, in the altered tone of the controversy, the Christians have rarely occasion to defend themselves against those horrible charges of licentiousness, incest, and cannibalism, which, till recently, their advocates had been constrained to notice. The Christians endeavoured to enlist the earlier philosophers in their cause; they were scarcely content with asserting that the nobler Grecian philosophy might be designed to prepare the human mind for the reception of Christianity; they were almost inclined to endow these sages with a kind of prophetic foreknowledge of its more mysterious

(1) *Elia Lampridii Alexander Severus.*

doctrines. “I have explained,” says the Christian in Minucius Felix, “the opinions of almost all the philosophers, whose most illustrious glory it is that they have worshipped one God, though under various names; so that one might suppose, either that the Christians of the present day are philosophers, or that the philosophers of old were already Christians (1).”

But these advances on the part of Christianity were more than met by Paganism. The Heathen religion, which prevailed at least among the more enlightened Pagans during this period, and which, differently modified, more fully developed, and, as we shall hereafter find, exalted still more from a philosophy into a religion, Julian endeavoured to reinstate as the established faith, was almost as different from that of the older Greeks and Romans, or even that which prevailed at the commencement of the empire, as it was from Christianity. It worshipped in the same temples; it performed, to a certain extent, the same rites; it actually abrogated the local worship of no one of the multitudinous deities of Paganism. But over all this, which was the real religion, both in theory and practice, in the older times, had risen a kind of speculative Theism, to which the popular worship acknowledged its humble subordination. On the great elementary principle of Christianity, the unity of the Supreme God, this approximation had long been silently made. Celsus, in his celebrated controversy with Origen, asserts that this philosophical notion of the Deity is perfectly reconcileable with Paganism. “We also can place a Supreme Being above the world, and above all human things, and approve and sympathise in whatever may be taught of a spiritual rather than material adoration of the gods; for, with the belief in the gods, worshipped in every land and by every people, harmonises the belief in a Primal Being, a Supreme God, who has given to every land its guardian, to every people its presiding deity. The unity of the Supreme Being, and the consequent unity of the design of the universe, remains, even if it be admitted that each people has its gods, whom it must worship in a peculiar manner, according to their peculiar character; and the worship of all these different deities is reflected back to the Supreme God, who has appointed them, as it were, his delegates and representatives. Those who argue that men ought not to serve many masters impute human weakness to God. God is not jealous of the adoration paid to subordinate deities; he is superior in his nature to degradation and insult. Reason itself might justify the belief in the inferior deities, which are the objects of the established worship. For since the Supreme God can only produce that which is immortal and imperishable, the existence of mortal beings cannot be explained, unless we distinguish from him

Change in
Heathen-
ism.

(1) I am here again considerably indebted to Tschirner, *Fall des Heidenthums*, p. 334—401.

those inferior deities, and assert them to be the creators of mortal beings and of perishable things (1).

Paganism
becomes
serious.

From this time, Paganism has changed not merely some of its fundamental tenets, but its general character; it has become serious, solemn, devout. In Lucian, unbelief seemed to have reached its height, and as rapidly declined. The witty satirist of Polytheism had, no doubt, many admirers; he had no imitators. A reaction has taken place; none of the distinguished statesmen of the third century boldly and ostentatiously, as in the times of the later republic, display their contempt for religion. Epicureanism lost, if not its partisans, its open advocates. The most eminent writers treat religion with decency, if not with devout respect; no one is ambitious of passing for a despiser of the gods. And with faith and piety broke forth all the aberrations of religious belief and devout feeling, wonder-working mysticism, and dreamy enthusiasm, in their various forms (2).

Apollonius
of Tyana.

This was the commencement of that new Platonism which, from this time, exercised a supreme authority, to the extinction of the older forms of Grecian philosophy, and grew up into a dangerous antagonist of Christianity. It aspired to be a religion as well as a philosophy, and gradually incorporated more and more of such religious elements from the creeds of the Oriental philosophers as would harmonise with its system. It was extravagant, but it was earnest; wild, but serious. It created a kind of literature of its own. The Life of Apollonius of Tyana was a grave romance, in which it embodied much of its Theurgy, its power of connecting the invisible with the visible world; its wonder-working, through the intermediate dæmons at its command, which bears possibly, but not clearly, an intentional, certainly a close, resemblance to the Gospels. It seized and moulded to its purpose the poetry and philosophy of older Greece. Such of the mythic legends as it could allegorise, it retained with every demonstration of reverence; the rest it either allowed quietly to fall into oblivion, or repudiated as lawless fictions of the poets. The manner in which poetry was transmuted into moral and religious allegory is shown in the treatise of Porphyrius on the cave of the nymphs in the Odyssey. The skill, as well as the dreamy mysticism, with which this school of writers combined the dim traditions of the older philosophy and the esoteric doctrines of the mysteries, to give the sanction of antiquity to their own vague but attractive and fanciful theories, appears in the Life of Pythagoras, and in the work on the Mysteries, by a somewhat later writer, Iamblichus.

Porphy-
rius.

Life of Py-
thagoras.

Philoso-
phic Pa-
ganism
not popu-
lar.

After all, however, this philosophic Paganism could exercise no very extensive influence. Its votaries were probably far inferior in

(1) Origen contra Celsum, lib. vii.

(2) Tschirnhausen, p. 401

number to any one of those foreign religions introduced into the Greek and Roman part of the empire; and its strength perhaps consisted in the facility with which it coalesced with any one of those religions, or blended them up together in one somewhat discordant syncretism. The same man was philosopher, Hierophant at Samothrace or Eleusis, and initiate in the rites of Cybele, of Serapis, or of Mithra. Of itself this scheme was far too abstract and metaphysical to extend beyond the schools of Alexandria or of Athens. Though it prevailed afterwards in influencing the Heathen fanaticism of Julian, it eventually retarded but little the extinction of Heathenism. It was merely a sort of refuge for the intellectual few—a self-complacent excuse, which enabled them to assert, as they supposed, their own mental superiority, while they were endeavouring maintain or to revive the ~~very~~ superstition, which they themselves could not, but in secret, condemn. The more refined it became, the less was it suited for common use, and the less it harmonised with the ordinary Paganism. Thus that which, in one respect, elevated it into a dangerous rival of Christianity, at the same time deprived it of its power. It had borrowed much from Christianity, or, at least, had been tacitly modified by its influence; but it was the speculative rather than the practical part, that which constituted its sublimity rather than its popularity, in which it approximated to the Gospel. We shall encounter this new Paganism again before long, in its more perfect and developed form.

The peace which Christianity enjoyed under the virtuous Severus Maximin. was disturbed by the violent accession of a Thracian savage (1). A. D. 235. It was enough to have shared in the favour of Alexander to incur the brutal resentment of Maximin. The Christian bishops like all the other polite and virtuous courtiers of his peaceful predecessor, were exposed to the suspicions and the hatred of the rude and warlike Maximin. Christianity, however, suffered, though in a severer degree, the common lot of mankind.

The short reign of Gordian was uneventful in Christian history. Gordian. The Emperors, it has been justly observed, who were born in the A. D. 238 Asiatic provinces were, in general, the least unfriendly to Christianity. Their religion, whatever it might be, was less uncongenial to some of the forms of the new faith; it was a kind of Eclecticism of different Eastern religions, which, in general, was least inclined to intolerance: at any rate, it was uninfluenced by national pride, which was now become the main support of Roman Paganism. Philip, the Arabian (2), is claimed by some of the earliest Christian writers as a convert to the Gospel. Philip. But the extraordinary splendour with which he celebrated the great religious rites of Rome refutes at once this statement. Yet it might be fortunate that A. D. 244.

(1) Euseb. Ecc. Hist. vi. 28

(2) Euseb. vi. 34.

Secular
games.
A. D. 247.

a sovereign of his mild sentiments towards the new faith filled the throne at a period when the secular games, which commemorated the thousandth year of Rome, were celebrated with unexampled magnificence. The majesty, the eternity, of the empire were intimately connected with the due performance of these solemnities. To their intermission, after the reign of Dioclesian, the Pagan historian ascribes the decline of Roman greatness. The second millennium of Rome commenced with no flattering signs; the times were gloomy and menacing; and the general and rigid absence of the Christians from these sacred national ceremonies, under a sterner or more bigoted emperor, would scarcely have escaped the severest animadversions of the government. Even under the present circumstances, the danger of popular tumult would be with difficulty avoided or restrained. Did patriotism and national pride incline the Roman Christians to make some sacrifice of their severer principles; to compromise for a time their rigid aversion to idolatry, which was thus connected with the peace and prosperity of the state?

Decius.
A. D. 249
-- 251.

The persecution under Decius, both in extent and violence, is the most uncontested of those which the ecclesiastical historians took pains to raise to the mystic number of the ten plagues of Egypt. It was almost the first measure of a reign which commenced in successful rebellion, and ended, after two years, in fatal defeat. The Goths delivered the Christians from their most formidable oppressor; yet the Goths may have been the innocent authors of their calamities. The passions and the policy of the Emperor were concurrent motives for his hostility. The Christians were now a recognised body in the state; however carefully they might avoid mingling in the political factions of the empire, they were necessarily of the party of the Emperor, whose favour they had enjoyed. His enemies became their enemies. Maximin persecuted those who had appeared at the court of Alexander Severus; Decius hated the adherents, as he supposed, the partisans, of the murdered Philip (1). The Gothic war shook to the centre the edifice of Roman greatness. Roman Paganism discovered in the relaxed morals of the people one of the causes of the decline of the empire; it demanded the revival of the censorship. This indiscriminating feeling would mistake, in the blindness of aversion and jealousy, the great silent corrective of the popular morality, for one of the principal causes of depravation. The partial protection of a foreign religion by a foreign Emperor (now that Christianity had begun to erect temple against temple, altar against altar, and the Christian bishop met the pontiff on equal terms around the imperial throne), would be considered among the flagrant departures from the sound wisdom of ancient

Causes of
the Decian
persecu-
tion.

Rome. The descendant of the Decii, however his obscure Pannonian birth might cast a doubt on his hereditary dignity, was called upon to restore the religion as well as the manners of Rome to their ancient austere purity; to vindicate its insulted supremacy from the rivalry of an Asiatic and modern superstition. The persecution of Decius endeavoured to purify Rome itself from the presence of these degenerate enemies to her prosperity. The bishop Fabianus was one of the first victims of his resentment; and the Christians did not venture to raise a successor to the obnoxious office during the brief reign of Decius. The example of the capital was followed in many of the great cities of the empire. In the turbulent and sanguinary Alexandria, the zeal of the populace outran that of the Emperor, and had already commenced a violent local persecution (1). Antioch lamented the loss of her bishop, Babylas, whose relics were afterwards worshipped in what was still the voluptuous grove of Daphne. Origen was exposed to cruel torments, but escaped with his life. But Christian enthusiasm, by being disseminated over a wider sphere, had naturally lost some of its first vigour. With many, it was now an hereditary faith, not embraced by the ardent conviction of the individual, but instilled into the mind, with more or less depth, by Christian education. The Christian writers now begin to deplore the failure of genuine Christian principles, and to trace the divine wrath in the affliction of the churches. Instead of presenting, as it were, a narrow, but firm and unbroken, front to the enemy, a much more numerous, but less united and less uniformly resolute, force now marched under the banner of Christianity. Instead of the serene fortitude with which they formerly appeared before the tribunal of the magistrate, many now stood pale, trembling, and reluctant, neither ready to submit to the idolatrous ceremony of sacrifice, nor prepared to resist even unto death. The fiery zeal of the African churches appears to have been most subject to these paroxysms of weakness (2); it was there that the fallen, the Lapsi, formed a distinct and too numerous class, whose readmission into the privileges of the faithful became a subject of fierce controversy (3); and the Libellatici, who had purchased a billet of immunity from the rapacious government, formed another party, and were held in no less disrepute by those who, in the older spirit of the faith, had been ready or eager to obtain the crown of martyrdom.

Fabianus,
Bishop of
Rome.

Enthusiasm of
Christianity
strong

Carthage was disgraced by the criminal weakness even of some among her clergy. A council was held to decide this difficult point; and the decisions of the council were tempered by moderation and

(1) Euseb. vi. 40, 41.

(2) Dionysius apud Eusebium, vi. 41.

(3) The severer opinion was called the heresy of Novatian; charity and orthodoxy, on this oc-

casion, concurred. Euseb. vi. sub fin., vii. 4. 5.

Another controversy arose on the rebaptizing heretics, in which Cyprian took the lead of the severer party. Euseb. vii. 3

humanity. None were perpetually and for ever excluded from the pale of salvation; but they were absolved, according to the degree of criminality which might attach to their apostacy. Those who sacrificed, the most awful and scarcely expiable offence, required long years of penitence and humility; those who had only weakly compromised their faith, by obtaining or purchasing billets of exemption from persecution, were admitted to shorter and easier terms of reconciliation (1).

Valerian.
A. D. 254.

Valerian, who ascended the throne three years after the death of Decius, had been chosen by Decius to revive, in his person, the ancient and honourable office of censor; and the general admiration of his virtues had ratified the appointment of the Emperor. It was no discredit to Christianity that the commencement of the censor's reign, who may be supposed to have examined with more than ordinary care its influence on the public morals, was favourable to their cause. Their security was restored; and, for a short time, persecution ceased. The change which took place in the sentiments and conduct of Valerian is attributed to the influence of a man deeply versed in magical arts (2). The censor was enslaved by a superstition which the older Romans would have beheld with little less abhorrence than Christianity itself. It must be admitted, that Christian superstition was too much inclined to encroach upon the province of Oriental magic; and the more the older Polytheism decayed, the more closely it allied itself with this powerful agent in commanding the fears of man. The adepts in those dark and forbidden sciences were probably more influential opponents of Christianity with all classes, from the Emperor, who employed their mystic arts to inquire into the secrets of futurity, to the peasant, who shuddered at their power, than the ancient and established priesthood.

Macrianus is reported to have obtained such complete mastery over the mind of Valerian, as to induce him to engage in the most guilty mysteries of magic, to trace the fate of the empire in the ent-
 A. D. 257. trails of human victims. The edict against the Christians, sugges-

(1) The horror with which those who had sacrificed were beheld by the more rigorous of their brethren may be conceived from the energetic language of Cyprian:—*Nonne quando ad Capitolium sponte ventum est, quando ultro ad obsequium diri facinoris accessum est, labavit gressus, caligavit aspectus, tremuerunt viscera, brachia considerant? Nonne sensus obstupuit, lingua hasit, sermo defecit? ... Nonne ara illa, quo moriturus accessit, rogius illi fuit? Nonne diaboli altare quod fetore tetro fumare et redolere conspexerat, velut funus et bustum vitæ suæ horrebat, ac fugere debebat? ... Ipse ad aram hostia, victima ipse venit. Inmolasti illis salutem tuam, sperem tuam, fidem tuam, funestis illis ignibus concremasti.* Cyprian, de Lapsis. Some died of remorse; with some the guilty food acted as poison. But the following was the most extra-

ordinary occurrence of which Cyprian declares himself to have been an eyewitness. *An infant had been abandoned by its parents in their flight. The nurse carried it to the magistrate. Being too young to eat meat, bread, steeped in wine offered in sacrifice, was forced into its mouth. Immediately that it returned to the Christians, the child, which could not speak, communicated the sense of its guilt by cries and convulsive agitations. It refused the sacrament (then administered to infants), closed its lips, and averted its face. The deacon forced it into its mouth. The consecrated wine would not remain in the contaminated body, but was cast up again.—In what a high-wrought state of enthusiasm must men have been who would relate and believe such statements as miraculous?*

(2) Euseb. 4 ii 10.

ted by the animosity of Macrianus, allowed the community to remain undisturbed impunity; but subjected all the bishops who refused to conform, to the penalty of death; and seized all the endowments of their churches into the public treasury.

The dignity of one of its victims conferred a melancholy celebrity on the persecution of Valerian. The most distinguished prelate at this time in Western Christendom was Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage. If not of honourable birth or descent, for this appears doubtful, his talents had raised him to eminence and wealth. He taught rhetoric at Carthage, and, either by this honourable occupation, or by some other means, had acquired an ample fortune. Cyprian was advanced in life when he embraced the doctrines of Christianity; but he entered on his new career, if with the mature reason of age, with the ardour and freshness of youth. His wealth was devoted to pious and charitable uses; his rhetorical studies, if they gave clearness and order to his language, by no means chilled its fervour or constrained its vehemence. He had the African temperament of character, and, if it may be so said, of style; the warmth, the power of communicating its impassioned sentiments to the reader; perhaps not all the pregnant conciseness, nor all the energy, of Tertullian, but, at the same time, little of his rudeness and obscurity. Cyprian passed rapidly through the steps of Christian initiation, almost as rapidly through the first gradations of the clerical order. On the vacancy of the bishopric of Carthage, his reluctant diffidence was overpowered by the acclamations of the whole city, who environed his house, and compelled him by their friendly violence to assume the distinguished and, it might be, dangerous office. He yielded, to preserve the peace of the city (1).

Cyprian,
Bishop of
Carthage.

Cyprian entertained the loftiest notions of the episcopal authority. The severe and inviolable unity of the outward and visible Church appeared to him an integral part of Christianity; and the rigid discipline enforced by the episcopal order the only means of maintaining that unity. The pale which enclosed the church from the rest of mankind was drawn with the most relentless precision. It was the ark, and all without it were left to perish in the unsparing deluge (2). The growth of heretical discord or disobedience was inexpiable, even by the blood of the transgressor. He might bear the flames with equanimity; he might submit to be torn to pieces by wild beasts—there could be no martyr *without* the church. Tortures and death bestowed not the crown of immortality; they were but the just retribution of treason to the faith (3).

(1) Epist. xiv.

(2) Si potuit evadere quisquam, qui extra arcam Noe fuit, et qui extra ecclesiam foris fuerit, evadit. Cyprian, de Unitate Ecclesie.

(3) Esse martyr non potest, qui in ecclesia non est.

Ardeant licet flammis et ignibus traditi, vel obiecti bestiis animas suas ponant, non erit illa fidei corona, sed pena perfidie; nec religiosa: virtutis exitus gloriosus, sed desperationis interitus. De Unit. Eccles.

Et tamen neque hoc baptismus (sanguinis) here-

The fearful times which arose during his episcopate tried these stern and lofty principles, as the questions which arose out of the Decian persecutions did his judgment and moderation. Cyprian, who embraced without hesitation the severer opinion with regard to the rebaptizing heretics, notwithstanding his awful horror of the guilt of apostacy, acquiesced in, if he did not dictate, the more temperate decisions of the Carthaginian synod concerning those whose weakness had betrayed them either into the public denial, or a timid dissimulation, of the faith.

The first rumour of persecution designated the Bishop of Carthage for its victim. "Cyprian to the lions!" was the loud and unanimous outcry of infuriated Paganism. Cyprian withdrew from the storm, not, as his subsequent courageous behaviour showed, from timidity; but neither approving that useless and sometimes ostentatious prodigality of life, which betrayed more pride than humble acquiescence in the divine will; possibly from the truly charitable reluctance to tempt his enemies to an irretrievable crime. He withdrew to some quiet and secure retreat, from which he wrote animating and consolatory letters to those who had not been so prudent or so fortunate as to escape the persecution. His letters describe the relentless barbarity with which the Christians were treated; they are an authentic and cotemporary statement of the sufferings which the Christians endured in defence of their faith. If highly coloured by the generous and tender sympathies, or by the ardent eloquence of Cyprian, they have nothing of legendary extravagance. The utmost art was exercised to render bodily suffering more acute and more intense; it was a continued strife between the obstinacy and inventive cruelty of the tormentor, and the patience of the victim (1). During the reign of Decius, which appears to have been one continued persecution, Cyprian stood aloof in his undisturbed retreat. He returned to Carthage probably on the commencement of Valerian's reign, and had a splendid opportunity of Christian revenge upon the city which had thirsted for his blood. A plague ravaged the whole Roman world, and its most destructive violence thinned the streets of Carthage. It went spreading on from house to house, especially those of the lower orders, with awful regularity. The streets were strewn with the bodies of the dead and the dying, who vainly appealed to the laws of nature and humanity for that assistance of which those who passed them by, might soon stand in need. General distrust spread through society. Men avoided or

Plague in
Carthage.

tico prodest, quamvis Christum confensus, et extra ecclesiam fuerit occisus. Epist. lxxiii.

"Though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. xiii. 3 — Is there no difference between the spirit of St. Paul and of Cyprian?

(1) Tolerantia usque ad consummationem gloriæ durissimam questionem, nec cessatis supplicii, sed vobis potius supplicia cesserunt.

Steterunt tuti torquentibus fortiores, et pulsantes et laniantes ungulas pulsata ac laniata membra vicerunt. Inexpugnabilem fidem superare non potuit sæviens diu plaga repetita quamvis rupta compage viscerum; torquerentur in servis Dei jam non membra, sed vulnera. Cyprian, Epist. viii. ad Martyres. Compare Epist. lxii.

exposed, their nearest relatives; as if, by excluding the dying, they could exclude death (1). No one, says the deacon Pontius, writing of the population of Carthage in general, did as he would be done by. Cyprian addressed the Christians in the most earnest and effective language. He exhorted them to show the sincerity of their belief in the doctrines of their master, not by confining their acts or kindness to their own brotherhood, but by extending them indiscriminately to their enemies. The city was divided into districts; offices were assigned to all the Christians; the rich lavished their wealth, the poor their personal exertions; and men, perhaps just emerged from the mine or the prison, with the scars or the mutilations of their recent tortures upon their bodies, were seen exposing their lives, if possible, to a more honourable martyrdom; as before the voluntary victims of Christian faith, so now of Christian charity. Yet the Heathen party, instead of being subdued, persisted in attributing this terrible scourge to the impiety of the Christians, which provoked the angry gods; nor can we wonder if the zeal of Cyprian retorted the argument, and traced rather the retributive justice of the Almighty for the wanton persecutions inflicted on the unoffending Christians.

A. D. 252.
Conduct
of Cyprian
and the
Chris-
tians.

Cyprian did not again withdraw on the commencement of the Valerian persecution. He was summoned before the proconsul, who communicated his instructions from the Emperor, to compel all those who professed foreign religions to offer sacrifice. Cyprian refused, with tranquil determination. He was banished from Carthage. He remained in his pleasant retreat, rather than place of exile, in the small town of Ceribis, near the sea-shore, in a spot shaded with verdant groves, and with a clear and healthful stream of water. It was provided with every comfort and even luxury, in which the austere nature of Cyprian would permit itself to indulge (2). But when his hour came, the tranquil and collected dignity of Cyprian in no respect fell below his lofty principles.

Cyprian's
retreat.

On the accession of a new proconsul, Galerius Maximus, Cyprian was either recalled or permitted to return from his exile. He resided in his own gardens, from whence he received a summons to appear before the proconsul. He would not listen to the earnest solicitations of his friends, who entreated him again to consult his safety by withdrawing to some place of concealment. His trial was postponed for a day; he was treated, while in custody, with respect and even delicacy. But the intelligence of the apprehension of Cyprian drew together the whole city; the Heathen, eager to behold the spectacle of his martyrdom; the Christians, to watch in their affec-

Return to
Carthage

(1) Pontius, in Vita Cypriani. Horrere omnes, fugere, vitare contagium; exponere suos impie; quasi cum illo peste morituro, etiam mortem ipsam aliquis posset excludere.

(2) "If," says Pontius, who visited his master

in his retirement, "instead of this sunny and agreeable spot, it had been a waste and rocky solitude, the angels which fed Elijah and Daniel would have ministered to the holy Cyprian."

tionate zeal at the doors of his prison. In the morning, he had to walk some distance, and was violently heated by the exertion. A Christian soldier offered to procure him dry linen, apparently from mere courtesy, but, in reality, to obtain such precious relics, steeped in the "bloody-sweat" of the martyr. Cyprian intimated that it was useless to seek remedy for inconveniences which, perhaps, that day would pass away for ever. After a short delay, the proconsul appeared. The examination was brief:—"Art thou Thascius Cyprian, the bishop of so many impious men? The most sacred Emperor commands thee to sacrifice." Cyprian answered, "I will not sacrifice." "Consider well," rejoined the proconsul. "Execute your orders," answered Cyprian; "the case admits of no consideration."

Galerius consulted with his council, and then reluctantly (1) delivered his sentence. "Thascius Cyprian, thou hast lived long in thy impiety, and assembled around thee many men involved in the same wicked conspiracy. Thou hast shown thyself an enemy alike to the gods and the laws of the empire; the pious and sacred Emperors have in vain endeavoured to recal thee to the worship of thy ancestors. Since then thou hast been the chief author and leader of these most guilty practices, thou shalt be an example to those whom thou hast deluded to thy unlawful assemblies. Thou must expiate thy crime with thy blood." Cyprian said, "God be thanked (2)." The Bishop of Carthage was carried into a neighbouring field and beheaded. He maintained his serene composure to the last. It was remarkable that but a few days afterwards the proconsul died. Though he had been in bad health, this circumstance was not likely to be lost upon the Christians.

Miserable
death of
the perse-
cutors of
Christianity.

Every where, indeed, the public mind was no doubt strongly impressed with the remarkable fact, which the Christians would lose no opportunity of enforcing on the awe-struck attention, that their enemies appeared to be the enemies of Heaven. An early and a fearful fate appeared to be the inevitable lot of the persecutors of Christianity. Their profound and earnest conviction that the hand of Divine Providence was perpetually and visibly interposing in the affairs of men would not be so deeply imbued with the spirit of their Divine Master, as to suppress the language of triumph, or even of vengeance, when the enemies of their God and of themselves either suffered defeat and death, or, worse than an honourable death, a cruel and insulting captivity. The death of Decius, according to the Pagan account, was worthy of the old republic. He was environed by the Goths; his son was killed by an arrow; he

(1) In the Acts, *vix agere* is the expression; it may however mean that he spoke with difficulty, on account of his bad health.

(2) I have translated this sentence, as the Acts of Cyprian are remarkable for their simplicity, and total absence of later legendary ornament,

and particularly for the circumstantial air of truth with which they do justice to the regularity of the whole proceeding. Compare the Life of Cyprian by the Deacon Pontius; the Acts, in Ruinart, p. 216; Cave's Lives of the Apostles, etc., art. Cyprian.

cried aloud, that the loss of a single soldier was nothing to the glory of the empire; he renewed the battle, and fell valiantly. The Christian writers strip away all the more ennobling incidents. According to their account, having been decoyed by the enemy, or misled by a treacherous friend, into a marsh where he could neither fight nor fly, he perished lamely, and his unburied body was left to the beasts and carrion fowls (1). The captivity of Valerian, the mystery which hung over his death, allowed ample scope to the imagination of those whose national hatred of the barbarians would attribute the most unmanly ferocity to the Persian conqueror, and of those who would consider their God exalted by the most cruel and debasing sufferings inflicted on the oppressor of the church. Valerian, it was said, was forced to bend his back that the proud conqueror might mount his horse, as from a footstool; his skin was flayed off, according to one more modern account, while he was alive, stuffed, and exposed to the mockery of the Persian rabble.

The luxurious and versatile Gallienus restored peace to the church. The edict of Valerian was rescinded; the bishops resumed their public functions; the buildings were restored, and their property, which had been confiscated by the state, restored to the rightful owners (2).

Gallienus
about
A. D. 260

The last transient collision of Christianity with the government before its final conflict under Dioclesian, took place, or was at least threatened, during the administration of the great Aurelian. the reign of Aurelian, occupied by warlike campaigns in every part of the world, left little time for attention to the internal police, or the religious interests, of the empire. The mother of Aurelian was priestess of the sun at Sirmium, and the Emperor built a temple to that deity, his tutelary god, at Rome. But the dangerous wars of Aurelian required the concurrent aid of all the deities who took an interest in the fate of Rome. The sacred ceremony of consulting the Sibylline books, in whose secret and mysterious leaves were written the destinies of Rome, took place at his command. The severe Emperor reproaches the senate for their want of faith in these mystic volumes, or of zeal in the public service, as though they had been infected by the principles of Christianity.

Aurelian
A. D. 271
—275.

But no hostile measures were taken against Christianity in the early part of his reign; and he was summoned to take upon himself the extraordinary office of arbiter in a Christian controversy. A new empire seemed rising in the East, under the warlike Queen of Palmyra. Zenobia extended her protection, with politic indifference, to Jew, to Pagan, and to Christian. It might almost appear that a kindred spiritual ambition animated her favourite, Paul of

(1) Ovat. Constant. apud Euseb. c. xxiv. Lactant. de Mort. Persecr.

(2) Euseb. vii. 13.; x. 23.

Paul of
Samosata.

Samosata, the Bishop of Antioch, and that he aspired to found a new religion, adapted to the kingdom of Palmyra, by blending together the elements of Paganism, of Judaism, and of Christianity. Ambitious, dissolute, and rapacious, according to the representation of his adversaries, Paul of Samosata had been advanced to the important see of Antioch; but the zealous vigilance of the neighbouring bishops soon discovered that Paul held opinions, as to the mere human nature of the Saviour, more nearly allied to Judaism than to the Christian creed. The pride, the wealth, the state of Paul, no less offended the feelings, and put to shame the more modest demeanour and humbler pretensions of former prelates. He had obtained, either from the Roman authorities or from Zenobia, a civil magistracy, and prided himself more on his title of duenary than of Christian bishop. He passed through the streets environed by guards, and preceded and followed by multitudes of attendants and supplicants, whose petitions he received and read with the stately bearing of a public officer rather than the affability of a prelate. His conduct in the ecclesiastical assemblies was equally overbearing: he sat on a throne, and while he indulged himself in every kind of theatric gesture, resented the silence of those who did not receive him with applause, or pay homage to his dignity. His magnificence disturbed the modest solemnity of the ordinary worship. Instead of the simpler music of the church, the hymns, in which the voices of the worshippers mingled in fervent, if less harmonious, unison, Paul organised a regular choir, in which the soft tones of female voices, in their more melting and artificial cadences, sometimes called to mind the voluptuous rites of Paganism, and could not be heard without shuddering by those accustomed to the more unadorned ritual (1). The Hosannas, sometimes introduced as a kind of salutation to the bishop, became, it was said, the chief part of the service, which was rather to the glory of Paul than of the Lord. This introduction of a new and effeminate ceremonial would of itself, with its rigid adversaries, have formed a ground for the charge of dissolute morals, against which may be fairly urged the avowed patronage of the severe Zenobia (2). But the pomp of Paul's expenditure did not interfere with the accumulation of considerable wealth, which he extorted from the timid zeal of his partisans; and, it was said, by the venal administration of the judicial authority of his episcopate, perhaps of his civil magistracy. But Paul by no means stood alone; he had a powerful party among the ecclesiastical body, the chorepiscopi of the country districts, and the presbyters of the city. He set at defiance the synod of bishops, who pronounced a solemn sentence of excommunication (3);

(1) Ὁν καὶ ἀκροῦσας ἂν τις προσέειπεν.

Such is the expression in the decree of excommunication issued by the bishops. Euseb. vii. 30.

(2) Compare Routh, Reliq. Sacr. ii. 505.

(3) See the sentence in Eusebius, vii. 30., and in Routh, Reliquæ Sacrae, ii. 465., et seq.

and secure under the protection of the Queen of Palmyra, if her ambition should succeed in wresting Syria, with its noble capital, from the power of Rome, and in maintaining her strong and influential position between the warring powers of Persia and the Empire, Paul might hope to share in her triumph, and establish his degenerate but splendid form of Christianity in the very seat of its primitive Apostolic foundation. Paul had staked his success upon that of his warlike patroness, and on the fall of Zenobia, the bishops appealed to Aurelian to expel the rebel against their authority, and the partisan of the Palmyrenes, who had taken arms against the majesty of the empire, from his episcopal dignity at Antioch. Aurelian did not altogether refuse to interfere in this unprecedented cause, but, with laudable impartiality, declined any actual cognisance of the affair, and transferred the sentence from the personal enemies of Paul, the Bishops of Syria, to those of Rome and Italy. By their sentence, Paul was degraded from his episcopate.

The sentiments of Aurelian changed towards Christianity near the close of his reign. The severity of his character, reckless of human blood, would not, if committed in the strife, have hesitated at any measures to subdue the rebellious spirit of his subjects. Sanguinary edicts were issued, though his death prevented their general promulgation; and in the fate of Aurelian the Christians discovered another instance of the Divine vengeance, which appeared to mark their enemies with the sign of inevitable and appalling destruction.

Till the reign of Dioclesian, the churches reposed in undisturbed but enervating security.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PERSECUTION UNDER DIOCLESIAN.

THE final contest between Paganism and Christianity drew near. Almost three hundred years had elapsed since the divine Author of the new religion had entered upon his mortal life in a small village in Palestine (1); and now, having gained so powerful an ascendancy over the civilised world, the Gospel was to undergo its last and most trying ordeal, before it should assume the reins of empire, and become the established religion of the Roman world. It was to sustain the deliberate and systematic attack of the temporal authority, arming, in almost every part of the empire, in defence of the ancient Polytheism. At this crisis, it is important to survey the

(1) Dioclesian began his reign A. D. 284. The commencement of the persecution is dated A. C. 303.

Peace of
the Chris-
tians.

state of Christianity, as well as the character of the sovereign, and of the government, which made this ultimate and most vigorous attempt to suppress the triumphant progress of the new faith. The last fifty years, with a short interval of menaced, probably of actual, persecution, during the reign of Aurelian, had passed in peace and security. The Christians had become not merely a public, but an imposing and influential, body; their separate existence had been recognised by the law of Gallienus; their churches had arisen in most of the cities of the empire; as yet, probably, with no great pretensions to architectural grandeur, though no doubt ornamented by the liberality of the worshippers, and furnished with vestments and chalices, lamps, and chandeliers of silver. The number of these buildings was constantly on the increase, or the crowding multitudes of proselytes demanded the extension of the narrow and humble walls. The Christians no longer declined, or refused to aspire to the honours of the state. They filled offices of distinction, and even of supreme authority, in the provinces, and in the army; they were exempted either by tacit connivance, or direct indulgence, from the accustomed sacrifices. Among the more immediate attendants on the Emperor, two or three openly professed the Christian faith; Prisca the wife, and Valeria, the daughter of Dioclesian, and the wife of Galerius, were suspected, if not avowed, partakers in the Christian mysteries (1). If it be impossible to form the most remote approximation to their relative numbers with that of the Pagan population; it is equally erroneous to estimate their strength and influence by numerical calculation. All political changes are wrought by a compact, organised, and disciplined minority. The mass of mankind are shown by experience, and appear fated, by the constitution of our nature, to follow any vigorous impulse from a determined and incessantly aggressive few.

Progress
of Chris-
tianity

Relaxation
of Chris-
tian
morals.

Of Chris-
tian cha-
rity.

The long period of prosperity had produced in the Christian community its usual consequences, some relaxation of morals: but Christian charity had probably suffered more than Christian purity. The more flourishing and extensive the community, the more the pride, perhaps the temporal advantages of superiority, predominated over the Christian motives, which led men to aspire to the supreme functions in the church. Sacerdotal domination began to exercise its awful powers, and the bishop to assume the language and the authority of the viceroy of God. Feuds distracted the bosom of the peaceful communities, and disputes sometimes proceeded to open violence. Such is the melancholy confession of the Christians themselves, who, according to the spirit of the times, considered the dangers and the afflictions to which they were exposed in the light of divine judgments; and deplored, perhaps with

(1) Euseb. Eccl. Hist. viii. 1.

something of the exaggeration of religious humiliation, the visible decay of holiness and peace (1). But it is the strongest proof of the firm hold of a party, whether religious or political, upon the public mind, when it may offend with impunity against its own primary principles. That which at one time is a sign of incurable weakness, or approaching dissolution, at another seems but the excess of healthful energy and the evidence of unbroken vigour.

The acts of Dioclesian are the only trustworthy history of his character. The son of a slave, or, at all events, born of obscure and doubtful parentage, who could force his way to sovereign power, conceive and accomplish the design of reconstructing the whole empire, must have been a man, at least, of strong political courage, of profound, if not always wise, and statesmanlike views. In the person of Dioclesian, the Emperor of Rome became an Oriental monarch. The old republican forms were disdainfully cast aside; consuls and tribunes gave way to new officers, with adulatory and un-Roman appellations. Dioclesian himself assumed the new title of Dominus or Lord, which gave offence even to the servile and flexible religion of his Pagan subjects, who reluctantly, at first, paid the homage of adoration to the master of the world.

Dioc's
sian.

Nor was the ambition of Dioclesian of a narrow or personal character. With the pomp, he did not affect the solitude, of an Eastern despot. The necessity of the state appeared to demand the active and perpetual presence of more than one person invested in sovereign authority, who might organise the decaying forces of the different divisions of the empire, against the menacing hosts of barbarians on every frontier. Two Augusti and two Cæsars shared the dignity and the cares of the public administration (2)—a measure, if expedient for the security, fatal to the prosperity, of the exhausted provinces, which found themselves burdened with the maintenance of four imperial establishments. A new system of taxation was imperatively demanded, and relentlessly introduced (3), while the Emperor seemed to mock the bitter and ill-suppressed murmurs of the provinces, by his lavish expenditure in magnificent and ornamental buildings. That was attributed to the avarice of Dioclesian, which arose out of the change in the form of government, and in some degree out of his sumptuous taste in that particular department, the embellishment, not of Rome only, but of the chief cities of the Empire—Milan, Carthage, and Nicomedia. At one time, the all-pervading government aspired, after a season of scarcity, to regulate the prices of all commodities, and of all interchanges, whether of labour or of bargain and sale, between man and man. This sin-

Change in
the state
of the em-
pire.

(1) Euseb. Eccl. Hist. viii. 4.

(2) In the *Leben Constantins des Grossen*, by Manso, there is a good discussion on the authority and relative position of the Augusti and the Cæsars.

(3) The extension of the rights of citizenship to the whole empire by Caracalla made it impossible to maintain the exemptions and immunities which that privilege had thus lavishly conferred.

gular and gigantic effort of well-meant, but mistaken despotism, has come to light in the present day (1).

Neglect of
Rome.

Among the innovations introduced by Dioclesian, none, perhaps, was more closely connected with the interests of Christianity than the virtual degradation of Rome from the capital of the empire, by the constant residence of the Emperor in other cities. Though the old metropolis was not altogether neglected in the lavish expenditure of the public wealth upon new edifices, either for the convenience of the people or the splendour of public solemnities, yet a larger share fell to the lot of other towns, particularly of Nicomedia (2). In this city, the emperor more frequently displayed the new state of his imperial court, while Rome was rarely honoured by his presence; nor was his retreat, when wearied with political strife, on the Campanian coast, in the Bay of Baiæ, which the older Romans had girt with their splendid seats of retirement and luxury; it was on the Illyrian and barbarous side of the Adriatic that the palace of Dioclesian arose, and his agricultural establishment spread its narrow belt of fertility. The removal of the seat of government more clearly discovered the magnitude of the danger to the existing institutions from the progress of Christianity. The East was, no doubt, more fully peopled with Christians than any part of the Western world, unless, perhaps, the province of Africa; at all events, their relative rank, wealth, and importance, much more nearly balanced that of the adherents of the old Polytheism (3). In Rome, the ancient majesty of the national religion must still have kept down in comparative obscurity the aspiring rivalry of Christianity. The Prætor still made way for the pontifical order, and submitted his fasces to the vestal virgin, while the Christian bishop pursued his humble and unmarked way. The modest church or churches of the Christians lay hid, no doubt in some sequestered street, or in the obscure Transeverine region, and did not venture to contrast themselves with the stately temples on which the ruling people of the world, and the sovereigns of mankind, had for ages lavished their treasures. However the church of the metropolis of the world might maintain a high rank in Christian estimation, might boast its antiquity, its Apostolic origin, at least of being the scene of Apostolic martyrdom, and might number many distinguished proselytes in all ranks, even

(1) Edict of Dioclesian, published and illustrated by Col. Leake. It is alluded to in the *Treatise de Mortibus Persecut.* c. vii.

(2) *Ita semper dementabat, Nicodemian studentis urbi Romanæ conquare.* De Mort. Persecut. c. 7.

(3) Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 37. Mr. Conybeare (Baumpton Lectures, page 345.) has drawn a curious inference from a passage in this chapter of Tertullian, that the majority of those who had a right of citizenship in those cities had embraced the Christian faith, while the mobs were its most furious opponents. It appears unquestionable that the strength of Christianity lay in the mid-

dle, perhaps the mercantile classes. The two last books of the *Paidagogos* of Clement of Alexandria, the most copious authority for Christian manners at that time, inveighs against the vices of an opulent and luxurious community, splendid dresses, jewels, gold and silver vessels, rich banquets, gilded litters and chariots, and private baths. The ladies kept Indian birds, Median peacocks, monkeys, and Maltese dogs, instead of maintaining widows and orphans; the men had multitudes of slaves. The sixth chapter of the third book—"that the Christian alone is rich," would have been unmeaning if addressed to a poor community.